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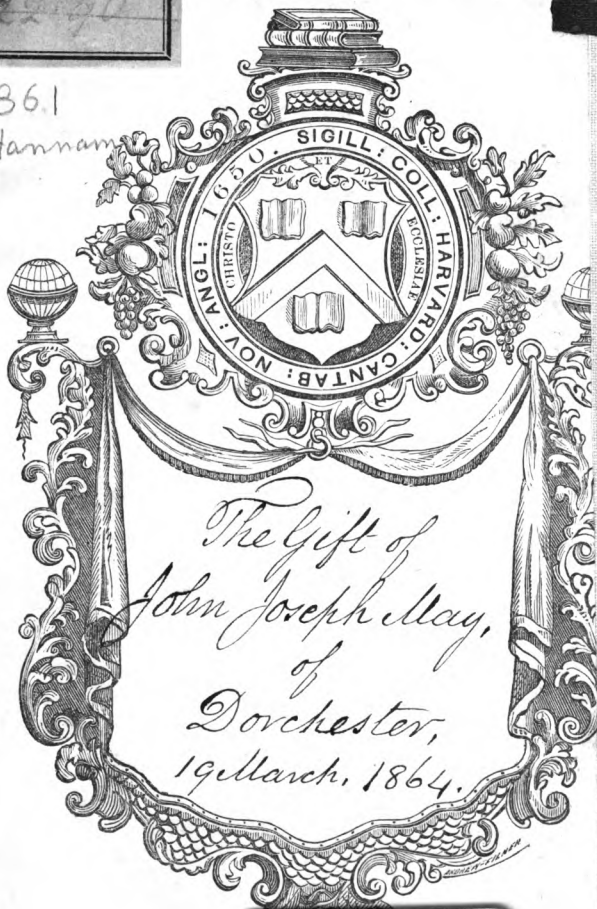
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THE
PULPIT ASSISTANT;

CONTAINING

THREE HUNDRED OUTLINES,

OR

SKELETONS OF SERMONS:

CHIEFLY EXTRACTED FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS.

WITH

An Essay

ON THE

COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

*In doctrine, shewing uncorruptness, gravity,
sincerity.—St. Paul.*

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

THE FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

Hannam, Thomas, comp.

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THE PULPIT ASSISTANT.

MEN'S NEGLECT OF GOD.

But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?—Job xxv. 10.

WE have an infinitely greater interest in God than we can have in all the creation, yet we are less conversant with him, than we are with those objects which daily present themselves to us. Happy were it, if devotion were more in fashion, and other things less; fortunate for the present age if it could be said, that Elihu's complaint is not applicable to it. "None saith, Where is God my Maker?" &c.

Consider,

I. What is meant by inquiring after God our Maker.

1. When we investigate the important question, Is there a Deity? what notions are we to form of his nature, perfections, and providence?

2. When we apply to him in the exercise of religious duty, particularly prayer. Job viii. 5; Isa. lv. 6.

3. When we are solicitous to discover his will concerning our duty, and privilege, as moral and reasonable beings. Rom. xii. 2; 1 Thess. iv. 3.

4. When we earnestly pant, after his approbation,

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and give ourselves no rest till we obtain it, through repentance for sin, and faith in the atonement of the Son of God. Rom: iii. 25, 26.

5. When we thirst after that better country, where God is enjoyed, and where our inquiries after him shall meet with ample success. There we shall have the justest, and the brightest ideas of him, the most glorious resemblance of his holy and benevolent nature. 1 John iii. 2.

II. Why is it, that so few are making this inquiry?

1. Because mankind are so much engaged about visible things; these strike the senses more than things of a spiritual and invisible nature; and seem to be the only things which command their attention.

2. Dissipation; they have no taste, but for play and amusement, one scene of diversion after another; the hours which should be spent in intercourse with heaven, are prostituted to folly, vanity, and idleness.

3. They make a God of this world, by placing their affections supremely upon it (James iv. 4.); its gold and silver, honour, fame, power, dominion, popular applause.

4. They are sensual, making a god of pleasure, sensuality, lascivious gratifications; how can a soul, thus fettered to earth, elevate itself to inquire after God its Maker! no more than a bird can ascend without wings.

5. Some live so criminally, that God is the object of their dread: they wish there was no God, are glad to hear religion opposed, would be happy to hear its truths confuted, if they could; they would obliterate the doctrine of providence, and the soul's immortality.

III. Consider the amiable account here given of God, "he giveth songs in the night;" or matter of songs, &c.

1. By exhibiting those bright orbs which fill the expanse of heaven. Ps. viii. 3, 4.

2. Night may be taken figuratively. Day is put for prosperity, success, joy, and comfort. Night for adversity, calamity, grief, and vexation. God cheereth the mourner's heart, and solaceth his people in the night of adversity, grants support, unexpected relief. Ps. lxvi. 19.

3. He giveth songs in the night of death, of praise and thanksgiving, of victory. 1 Cor. xv. 55; iv. 7.

Improvement.

1. Let us rejoice in him, who lifteth up the hands that hang down, and giveth songs of praise in adversity.

2. Let us adore the wisdom of providence, in whose dispensations day and night, good and evil, are so seasonably blended, enjoy the good thankfully, suffer the evil with resignation.

3. Let us fortify ourselves under every calamity by looking forward to that blessed period, when the good man's night shall be changed into everlasting day.

GOD'S LOVE TO MAN IN THE GIFT OF HIS SON.

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—Rom. viii. 32.

To think worthily of God we must conceive of him as a Being of universal benevolence : he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to accomplish our deliverance from sin and misery. What may we not expect after such an instance of love? So the apostle argues ; and is not his argument like the melody of heaven? Does it not awake every feeling of hope, love, and devotion? Does it not touch every tender spring of the heart? “ ~~He that spared not,~~ ” &c.

I. Illustrate the meaning of the expression, “ God spared not his own Son.”

1. These words express the awful procedure of God towards a person related to him in the most endearing manner. Christ is the Son of God, his own Son, his only Son. John i. 14 ; Heb. i. 3.

2. Not that the Father withdrew his love from him ; for as Christ was always perfectly amiable, so the Father's love to him is perfectly steady.

3. Not that he behaved to him, as some earthly parents do towards their children ; in a cruel, unjust, and tyrannical manner.

4. But that the Father did not withhold his Son, when the circumstances of man required such a Mediator.

5. That he abated nothing of the punishment

which Christ, as our Mediator, voluntarily undertook to bear. (Isa. liii. 5.) And so made an atonement for the sins of the whole world. 1 John ii. 2.

II. In what sense God delivered up his Son for us all.

1. It may apply to his incarnation: he was then delivered to an humble condition. The Word was made flesh. John i. 14.

2. Delivered to mean circumstances in our nature, poverty and want. (Matt. viii. 20.) Persecution. Isa. liii. 3.

3. To unspeakable agony of mind. Matt. xxvi. 38.

4. Into the hands of malicious men, who bound, scourged, buffeted, crowned him with thorns, and spit upon him.

5. To death, the death of the cross: shameful, painful. All this came to pass by the appointment of God, in consequence of his friendly intentions to man.

6. For us all; in our stead; for our benefit; that we might be justified, sanctified, glorified. 1 Peter iii. 18; Heb. ii. 10.

III. The inference drawn from the divine conduct as expressed in the text. If God gave up his Son for us all, we may depend upon it, that he will give us all things together with him.

1. All things temporal, as God sees necessary, and as will be most conducive to our present and eternal happiness.

2. All spiritual blessings, illumination, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, peace, love, joy, hope, eternal glory: and the certainty of receiving these things arises,

3. From the immutability of God's goodness. The apostle's meaning is, that so great an expression of love, as God's delivering his Son, infers every other expression.

4. From God's giving his Son power to give all things. Matt. xxviii. 18.

5. From the promise of God. Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

Improvement.

1. Let the benevolence of the Father, in delivering up his Son for us all, excite us to acts of charity to the poor and needy.

2. Let it excite the warmest emotions of love and gratitude to God for his boundless love.

3. Let that love and gratitude appear in a jealous devotedness to his service and glory.

4. Let it encourage our entire dependance on God in Christ, for present salvation, and eternal glory.

CHRIST'S LOVE TO MAN IN DYING FOR HIM.

The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.—
2 Cor. v. 14.

IN the former verse the apostle represents himself and his brethren discharging their duty with so much zeal and ardour, as might be construed madness by superficial and inconsiderate minds. In the text he accounts for this conduct, and tells us what principle it was that thus actuated them. 'The love of Christ, &c. This kindles an internal fire in our minds; this offers a moral violence to our wills and affections, and

makes a kind of necessity, the agent in performing his pleasure.

I. Describe the love of Christ in dying for men. Four things exhibit this love in the most advantageous light, and recommend it by whatever can endear or persuade.

1. The dignity of the person who loved us, the Son of God, who is God over all. John i. 1; Rom. ix. 5.

2. The nature of his sufferings and death. He was poor, persecuted, rejected, scourged, crowned with thorns and crucified. Phil. ii. 7, 8.

3. The noble and blessed end for which he died; to leave us a pattern of patience and resignation, of integrity and benevolence; to deter men for ever from sin; to induce to holiness; to raise our souls to God, by the charms of such love; to prevent our dying for ever; to shut the gates of hell; open heaven; replace man in paradise, that he might be the author of salvation to all that obey him.

4. The character of those for whom he died. The impure, the guilty, the ungodly, enemies to God. (Rom. v. 8. 10.) The unjust. 1 Peter iii. 18.

II. In what sense all were dead, when Christ died for all.

1. All mankind were subject to natural death through the original transgression. Rom. v. 10.

2. Were morally dead; destitute of every good and gracious principle; dead in sin. Ephes. ii. 1.

3. Were liable to the second death. (Rev. xxi. 8.) Condemned to suffer it. John iii. 18.

III. Consider the returns to which this great love obliges men.

1. To express the most grateful sense of his loving-

kindness, by loving him (1 John iv. 19.); imitating him in sincerity, beneficence, justice, devotion, mildness, peaceableness, mercifulness. 1 Peter ii. 21.

2. To obey his government over us, by consulting his will as revealed in the Scriptures; and cheerfully complying with his commands. John xiv. 15.

3. To prepare for his second appearing; to be found of him in peace, without spot (Ephes. v. 27.); with confidence and joy. 1 John ii. 28.

CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which, being interpreted, is, God with us. Matt. i. 23.

WE read in the ancient poets, of the gods descending to this earth, and occasionally visiting the sons of men: what they tell us on this subject is mere fable; it is the poet's own invention, contrived to animate his story. But the gospel delivers to us a matter of fact; it celebrates the actual descent of God to our world, to dwell among men; to refine their grovelling nature; to lead them beyond the grave to scenes of immortality. The coming of Jesus Christ is a visit from heaven, a visit from the Prince of heaven: it is more, it is God himself entering into the strictest union with human nature. This is the meaning of that great name, by which our Lord is dignified in my text.

I. Consider in what sense Christ is Emmanuel, and in what respects he answers that name.

1. He is literally so: God with us; he is God united to man. God veiling the splendour of his di-

vinity under a human form. (John i. 14.) The Messiah is properly the Schëchina, God dwelling in man. And so intimate in this union, that the properties of the one nature are applied and transferred to the other. The properties of the Word are ascribed to human nature ; and reciprocally the properties of human nature to the divine person, called the Word. (See John iii. 13.) Christ was in heaven at the time he preached on the earth ; but this was true of him only as God. (Acts xx. 28.) Blood was applicable to Christ, only as man, and yet the apostle applies it to God : the foundation of which language can only be this, that one person is both God and man. This is mysterious (1 Tim. iii. 16.) ; yet no absurdity in it. God the creator of all, who pervades all, may animate and connect himself with any particular nature, and to what degree he thinks proper. The gospel declares this to be matter of fact.

2. Because of the god-like virtues he displayed ; he lived like God. Did nothing but good ; was perfectly innocent ; humble, meek ; benevolent to friends and foes. He gave health to the sick, &c. In the height of his agony, pleaded the cause of his murderers ; and the dignity of his conduct forced the centurion to cry, "Truly this," &c. Matt. xxvii. 54.

3. Because of his office of Mediator ; he is the peace-maker between God and fallen man : it is through him that God is reconciled ; God and man united ; through him the blessings of salvation flow to man ; the duties of religion, performed, ascend acceptably to God. In this sense he is "God with us."

II. For what purpose did the Son of God unite with human nature ?

1. To enlighten mankind with the most important discoveries. (Matt. iv. 16; Luke i. 78, 79.) To teach us the unity of God; the terms of our acceptance with God; to unfold the invisible world; to lay open the state of the dead; to give the highest idea of the happiness of good men, and the misery of the bad; to assure us of a general resurrection, and final judgment; the everlasting consequences of both; to give us rules of conduct in the greatest simplicity, clothed with language so plain as to suit the meanest capacity; and so sublime as to charm the most cultivated mind.

2. To exhibit to man a pattern of perfect righteousness and virtue. What ingredient is there of genuine piety, which we find not exemplified in the conduct of Jesus? How gentle, benign, patient, was his answer to his disciples. (Luke ix. 54—56.) How temperate, yet not austere! How magnanimous! adhering to truth in the face of danger and death. How benevolent! his whole life was one continued flow of ardent affection, of generous deeds. How humble! How devout! He continually breathed adoration, thanks, resignation, and obedience to the Great Original, whence he came and whither he went.

3. To expiate human guilt, and procure the pardon of sin by the sacrifice of his death. John i. 29; Gal. iii. 13; Heb. ix. 22.

4. To remove all variance between God and man; that God might dwell among them. 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.

5. To purify our nature, and restore us to the divine image. Tit. ii. 14.

6. To bring us into the happiest union with God; that he might bring us to heaven, which is, properly speaking, the land of Emmanuel; a land where God

is with us, and we are with God. Rev. xxi. 3 ; xxii. 4, 5.

Improvement.

1. If Christ is Emmanuel, he has a clear title to our religious homage. John v. 23.

2. It should excite our highest admiration of the divine goodness and condescension.

3. Let us feel a divine sensibility of mind ; display a proper sublimity of conduct, by not degrading that nature which God hath so highly honoured by assuming it into an immediate society with himself. Let us cast out this earth from our hearts ; let us no longer prostitute our love to inferior things, but live as those whose prospects extend beyond the present perishing world ; who hope, by the power of Emmanuel, to be one day conquerors over death and the grave. 1 Cor. xv. 54—58.

To conclude. Let us be sensible to the life of God in our nature ; daily ascend to him in such efforts as our nature is capable of ; by the aid of his Spirit let us go from strength to strength till we appear before him in Zion, and take our seat with Emmanuel in the regions of the blessed. Amen !

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM.

Ye are come to Mount Zion, &c.—Heb. xii. 22, 23.

NOTHING tends more to elevate the soul than to contemplate the glorious relations that ennobled us by embracing the gospel. There is a general bond that unites all mankind : we are all by nature connected and allied to each other : we are the same flesh and blood, animated with the same immortal and

reasonable souls. In every civil society there is also a positive relation uniting its several members, by virtue of which they are esteemed to form one political body; but the religion of Christ introduces a new and more noble kind of alliance; it opens a communication between heaven and earth; it incorporates mortal men with the blessed angels and immortal spirits above. As men, we are allied to each other; as Christians, we are raised out of ourselves, and united to beings of a higher order, and a more exalted perfection: in a word, the gospel translates us who dwell in houses of clay to the "city which hath foundations." "Ye are come to mount Zion."

These words present the following considerations.

I. The state of heaven as a glorious city. "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem."

By mount Zion, is not meant the mountain literally so called; but that glorious region prefigured by it; for it is farther styled "the heavenly Jerusalem." As we cannot form an adequate conception of heaven, it is shadowed forth under various comparisons; it is likened to a pearl of great price, an incorruptible kingdom, a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Every image that is great and agreeable, that can dazzle the eye, or fire the imagination, is borrowed to give some idea of that which surpasseth understanding. It is here compared to a rich and magnificent city, the city of the living God; also Heb. xi. 10. This is that city.

1. Where the most glorious display of divine wisdom appears, every thing conducted with exquisite policy.

2. Where omnipotent goodness operates at large,

and deals her favours with the richest profusion. Ps. xvi. 11.

3. Where the King of glory himself dwells, and every thing declares his more immediate presence. Rev. vii. 15.

4. Where the laws, manners, and employments of the inhabitants, most resemble, and are most worthy of God.

5. In fine, this is that city which is the first production of the grand Architect of nature, and whither we are at last conveyed, but not till duly prepared for it. (Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 14.) See a fine description of this city, Rev. xxi. 10—22. And of this city, all real Christians are represented as members, even while they are in this world; and this is the

II. Thing to be observed in these words; our accession or relation to it. There is a certain figure made use of by our Saviour and his apostles, a figure that anticipates hereafter; that makes futurity present, and realizes the distant glories of immortality. (Matt. v. 3; Eph. ii. 6.) And the text says, “ye are come;” “already come,” &c. The Christian religion suggests particular grounds for this sublime representation, such as no other system, or institution, can exhibit. For example, we have,

1. The express promise of God to put every persevering Christian into the possession of mount Zion above. Rev. xxii. 14; ii. 7. 10.

2. It is farther ascertained from the mediation of Christ, the grand end of which see, Heb. ii. 10.

3. The supreme power of the Redeemer. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Which is equal to remove every difficulty, subdue every enemy, supply every necessity, and exalt to the highest dignity. It is an infallible

event, that they who regulate themselves by the laws of that higher country, shall at last be received into it: for as in the natural world there is, by the appointment of God, a natural connexion between seed-time and harvest; so in the moral world, they who, by piety and virtue, sow for heaven, shall finally reap it. (Gal. vi. 7, 8.) It is therefore with great propriety, that real Christians are represented by a noble anticipation as already come to mount Zion. We may now consider,

III. Our relation to the Head and to the members of this city. And we shall arrange them in such order as their several natures respectively entitle them to.

1. Ye are come to God, the Judge of all, angels and men; the knowledge of God, his nature, unity, perfections, providence. (Eph. v. 8.) The worship and service of God. (1 Thess. i. 9.) To his favour. (Rom. v. 1.) His family and household. (Gal. iv. 6, 7.) His presence; an event so certain that the apostle at once transports the Christian beyond the grave, to that Being, who is the soul's portion, her centre and final happiness.

2. To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant: in and through whom both parts of the covenant are reciprocally conveyed and transmitted. Blessing from God to man, through Christ, and duties from man to God, acceptable through Christ. Come to the Mediator, so as to be united to him; participate a new nature through him (2 Cor. v. 17.); rely on his sacrifice, obey his commandments, and according to the aforementioned figure, to be taken by him at last to the city of God. Rev. iii. 21.

3. To an innumerable company of angels: Good men in this world have indisputably various cou-

nexious with those superior beings, they are fellow-subjects and servants. (Rev. xxii. 9.) Protected by them. (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) Ministers to them. (Heb. i. 14.) Conduct them to heaven. (Luke xvi. 22.) As public heralds, proclaim their Lord's approach. (Matt. xxiv. 31.) The apostle here anticipates our incorporation with those happy spirits in glory. Rev. vii. 9—12.

4. To the spirits of just men made perfect. We are one community, of the same spirit and disposition, loving the same God, enjoying the same felicity, differing only in degree. They are got home, we are going; they have got the prize, we are wrestling for it. They are perfected in knowledge, comparatively; their piety refined into the brightest fire; their devotion feels that ardour which is the character of heaven; their social temper is matured: to these happy souls the Christian is united, and death will soon remove him to their blessed society.

5. To the general assembly, and church of the first-born. (Rom. viii. 29; Col. i. 15—18.) It may respect themselves; they are the chiefs, the excellent ones, the first-born. Written in heaven; alluding to the custom of ancient states, who enrolled their free-men; Christians enrolled in heaven (Luke x. 20), to signify, that they have a right to all the high privileges of the city of God. And, when all collected, compose the general assembly, &c. (Matt. xxiv. 31; Rev. vii. 9.) Of this amazing corporation every Christian becomes a member at the moment of his conversion to God.

Improvement.

1. Hence see the peculiar excellency of that religion which animates her proselytes with so glorious a hope.

2. Let our temper and conduct declare our kindred to those serene and happy intelligences.

3. Let the view of these glorious and animating prospects raise our souls to God in grateful adoration of his goodness and love. Ps. xxxi. 21; lxxii. 18, 19.

CHRIST THE MESSENGER OF HIS OWN GOSPEL.

But last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son.—Matt. xxi. 37.

THE method of instructing by parables was much in vogue among all the nations of the east, especially the Jewish. In conformity to this custom, and to convey the most important lessons under lively and sensible images, images suited at once to inform and move his audience, are reasons why our blessed Lord makes such frequent use of parables.

These words are part of a very interesting parable delivered by him to the Jews; and it finishes with an affecting description of God's sending his Son to them, and their ungrateful and cruel treatment of him. Verses 38, 39.

The words of the text furnish us with the following reflections.

I. The dignity of the person whom God employed to preach the gospel,—his Son.

1. A person superior to Moses, the prophets, and infinitely superior to every other messenger of God.

2. The sublimest titles are bestowed on this Person both in the Old and New Testament; he is styled God's beloved Son; his only Son; the only-begotten of the Father; God over all, blessed for ever; Ema-

nuel; Jehovah our Righteousness; Alpha and Omega; the perfect image or character of the invisible God; full of grace and truth; the True, the Righteous, the Holy; has the keys of hell and death.

II. That this is the final interposition of God in our favour, "last of all." It is the last effort of Heaven, the ultimate exertion of divine mercy toward the restoration of man.

1. As he is infinitely superior to all that were before him; so it may well be presumed that none will come after him, and that the message he brings, seals and finishes God's revelation to the children of men. Besides,

2. This is the constant language of Scripture. Heb. ii. 3. 10. 14. To the same purpose said our Saviour to the Jews. (John viii. 24.) And,

3. This is the reason why the predictions relating to the Messiah refer his coming to the last days. (Isa. ii. 2.) These expressions "last day," and "the end of the world," &c. are applied to the age of the gospel, to shew that, it is the last dispensation God will vouchsafe to mankind. It is the final message of the Almighty.

III. Our duty, in relation to this sacred Messenger of heaven; to reverence him.

1. By attending to the proofs of his divine mission. This he requires. John v. 31. 38.

2. By receiving him in that capacity with gratitude, love, hope, joy; we should raise our hosannahs (Matt. xxi. 9.); and ascribe glory to God. Luke ii. 14.

3. By embracing the holy errand on which he was sent, and complying with the practical purposes of his mission; "God raised up his Son to bless us." How?

"In turning us from our iniquities," and teaching us "to deny ungodliness," &c. Tit. ii. 12.

4. By forming ourselves according to that sacred model he exhibited to mankind. We must breathe his Spirit, and imitate his graces. John xiii. 15; 1 Peter ii. 21.

5. By receiving pardon and sanctification through that awful method which God has appointed; the blood of his Son. Col. i. 14; John i. 7.

6. By daily acts of worship and adoration; honouring the Son as we honour the Father. John v. 23; Rom. xiv. 11.

Improvement.

1. Let us dread the consequences of receiving so much grace and favour from God in vain, by neglecting our day of visitation.

2. If we reverence and respect Jesus Christ, who is God's own Son, so nearly allied to him, we may assuredly expect the favour of the Almighty.

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS, &c. FINISHED.

He said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.—John xix. 30.

WHETHER it be that dying men are most serious, and if ever they speak their real sentiments, it must be at that period; or whether it be, that one stepping into the invisible world, is almost considered as a messenger from it, fit to instruct the living how to behave in their future conduct; or, whatever else may be the reason, one thing is certain, that the words of a dying

man are listened to with peculiar attention: and if we lend so serious an ear to the last speech of expiring mortals, what profound attention must be due to the exit of the Son of God, and to the words he pronounced at leaving this world! They are few in number, but full of meaning: "he said, It is finished." The words, "he gave up the ghost," possibly, have a much higher meaning than when applied to any other person. They express a voluntary surrender of himself for the sins of men. (John x. 18.) As Jesus came into the world to accomplish the redemption of mankind by his death, so he seems, in the text, to express a magnanimous complacency, in his having accomplished that grand design: "He said," with a secret joy, becoming his benevolent soul, "It is finished;" my design of coming, my mediatorial work, as far as it relates to this world, to this side of heaven.

I. Inquire into the sense of these words, "It is finished."

1. They may refer to those types under the law, by which his death was prefigured. The legal constitution of things was wholly typical of the more perfect dispensation to be established under the Messiah. (Heb. x. 1.) In his death they were all fulfilled.

2. To the ancient prophecies, which relate to him and his death. (Gen. iii. 15: Isa. liii; Dan. ix. 26. Zech. xiii. 7.) When he died, they were all accomplished.

3. To the Jewish economy: for having fulfilled the types and prophecies of the law, he put a period to that dispensation. (Col. ii. 14.) But not to the moral law, which is eternal in its obligations to obedience (Matt. v. 17—19.), and receives a new sanction from the death of Christ.

4. To the atonement for sin : by his death he made a perfect and final expiation of it. He finished transgression. Dan. ix. 24; Heb. x. 14.

5. To the purchase of our redemption, which was finished by his death : he not only atoned for our sin, but also purchased immortality for us. (Heb. v. 8, 9; ix. 12.) His work, as Mediator, as it respects this world, was perfected through suffering. Heb. ii. 10.

6. To the perfect pattern of sanctity and goodness, he exhibited for the imitation of men. 1 Peter ii. 21.

II. The consequences of all this in relation to Christ.

1. If Jesus has fulfilled both the types and the prophecies of the law, it follows by immediate consequence, that he is the Messiah.

2. If Jesus submitted even to death itself, in order to finish our redemption, we infer that he is not less willing than able to save us.

3. Hence see the virtue of the death of Christ, that by one offering of himself, he hath finished transgression, &c, which must be ascribed to the dignity of his person. (Acts xx. 28.) What is it that the blood of God may not atone for !

4. If Jesus finished, and exhausted the character of Mediator, it follows that all others are of mere human invention.

5. That if his sufferings were finished when he died, the idea of his going into the place of the damned, to suffer there, has no foundation in truth.

6. We see the reason why the death of Christ is celebrated in heaven, and are kindling the hallelujahs of the blessed above. Rev. i. 5, 6; v. 11, 12.

III. The practical consequences of all this, in relation to us.

1. If Jesus has shewn himself to be the Messiah, by fulfilling the types and prophecies, let us treat him as the Sent of God, and Saviour of the world.

2. If he has atoned for sin, &c. let us totally and finally break all connexion with it. Isa. lv. 7.

3. If he condescended to die for our salvation, let us be grateful, affectionate, and strive in all things to please him.

4. If he has finished the purchase of redemption on his part, let us be careful to fulfil the conditions on our part; repentance, faith, love, and all holy obedience. John xiii. 17.

In fine, if Jesus has left us an example, let us endeavour, more and more, to conform ourselves to it. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

THE UPRIGHT TRIUMPHANT. *A.O*

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.—Ps. xlix. 14.

WITH what contempt do the generality of mankind look upon what is called uprightness; but there is a day coming that will undeceive them: death will open their eyes, and the dawn of another life will manifest the worth of what they so much undervalued. Though the wicked now trample on the friends of truth, they shall, in their turn, have their day of triumph; and this is beautifully expressed in the words of the text, "The upright," &c.

I. The nature of uprightness.

1. The upright man regards truth in all he says and does; delivers it freely, and keeps to it strictly.

2. He is sincere in all his professions of piety. He

is not religious because religion is fashionable, or popular; but because it is the genuine complexion of his soul.

3. He is always disposed to deal honestly with mankind; sincere in his attachments and friendships.

4. He is always disposed to do what is right, and he does it from a principle of conscience. The essence of integrity lies here.

5. Instead of fixing his eyes on worldly gain, he seeks to better his own soul, and improve his disposition.

6. He ultimately intends the approbation of God, and in all his designs he seeks to please him.

II. In what sense it may be said to be oppressed, in the present state of things.

1. Many a virtuous soul has groaned beneath the burden of poverty.

2. And have been held in contempt for being so; as if it were a virtue to be rich, and a vice to be poor.

3. They have been ridiculed for their piety and virtue; and laughed at for the respect they have shewn to the Divine Being.

4. Or, if they do not go to such an enormous length, they pride themselves in deprecating the best men, and their best actions. Ps. lxxiii. 3—14.

III. The certainty of righteousness prevailing in the morning of a better day.

How agreeable is the image here used to represent the arrival of upright men on the shores of the blessed, and to describe their first felicity and joy! How sweetly is it compared to the morning!

1. Then shall the righteous be superior to the evils of this life; pain, poverty, &c.

2. No censure shall arise to blast the fame of the

innocent, or lessen the reputation of the well-deserving man.

3. The most endearing regard shall meet their eye, wherever they turn it.

4. All the orders of the blessed shall conspire, with unfeigned lips, to applaud their constancy in the truth.

5. Thus shall it fare with the righteous; but let the wicked prepare to meet a different fate. They shall be tormented by their own consciences; corrupt passions, without objects to gratify them; and the displeasure of that Being, whose existence they hardly believed.

Improvement.

1. Let the enemies of truth and religion remember, that their enjoyment will not be lasting; their triumph will soon be ended.

2. Let the upright be patient in adversity, knowing that the day of their triumph approaches; when they shall obtain an immortal victory over the enemies of their peace.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S STRENGTH, &c.

For thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.—Ps. xxxi. 4, 5.

THESE are the words of holy David; one born from heaven; and hoping, if the almost desperate dangers he was now in should bring him down to death, as they threatened to do, he should be taken up thither by his merciful God.

From these words we may observe,

1. That dying is considered by the good man as a work of considerable difficulty.

1. As it is a work untried: and none are allowed to return to tell what it is.

2. As it is a final farewell to the present world; to accommodations, comforts, employments, delights, relations. Isa. xxxviii. 11, 12.

3. As it is to put off a part of ourselves, our bodies, for which we feel a great love and tenderness; which is reduced to dust. Eccl. xii. 7.

4. As it puts an end to our state of probation, which makes dying work of the greatest importance. We are sent into this world to prepare for another. Gal. vi. 7, 8.

5. As it removes the soul into a new state and world. We know what this world is, but we know very little of the other. 1 John iii. 2.

6. As it introduces the soul into the presence of God as a judge, who will determine its eternal state. Heb. ix. 27.

II. The children of God, when dying, are chiefly concerned about their souls: "O Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" let that be safe, and all is well.

1. Holy souls must leave the body, by dying, as well as others. Zech. i. 5.

2. They discover their great care to their souls, by looking off from the creature to God, and seeking their happiness in him. Ps. lxii. 5.

III. The real Christian has abundant encouragement, when dying, to commit his soul into the hands of God, in a lively hope that he shall be happy with him for ever.

This committing of the soul to God, implies,

1. That the rest and happiness of the soul is only to be found in God. Ps. lxxiii. 25.

2. A reviving persuasion that God is become the God of peace to the Christian; as having received satisfaction for him through Jesus Christ. Rom. v. 1; Eph. ii. 14, 15.

3. A making use of Christ as the way to the Father. John xiv. 6.

The saints commit their souls into the hands of God by Jesus Christ.

1. That they might be safe. 2 Tim. i. 12.

2. Admitted to dwell with him. Phil. i. 23.

3. That their bodies may at length be raised and reunited. Rom. viii. 11.

4. And this they do in obedience to his command: God requires the soul. Luke xii. 20.

5. And this is the last crowning act of obedience; we live, we die, to the Lord. Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

Improvement.

1. What a great difference there is between the souls and bodies of men. The soul survives the body.

2. What a blessed change has the grace of God made in the judgments and affections of his people. Their souls are their principal care.

3. It is the people of God only, who have so much encouragement to commit their souls into his hands, when dying. Prov. xiv. 32.

4. How great are our obligations to Christ, for purchasing so great a privilege for us.

5. Let us not be slothful, &c. Heb. vi. 12.

MAN'S ORIGINAL APOSTACY.

*And the Lord called unto Adam, and said unto him,
Where art thou?—Gen. iii. 9.*

WE have the voice of man's Creator and Judge, making inquiries after his creature, now lost, and by his early disobedience, fallen from God. The Almighty coming into Paradise, and finding his creatures fled, avoiding his presence, hiding themselves among the trees; he calls to one of them, in the words of the text, "Adam, where art thou?"

Consider,

I. The primitive apostacy: how it came to pass.

1. Man, though created perfectly holy, was mutable. He had power sufficient to preserve his innocence, but was yet liable to fall.

2. The occasion of man's apostacy was Satan's temptation. Gen. iii. 4, 5.

3. Man's fall was voluntary. Satan could tempt, but not force his will. Man might have resisted, and maintained his integrity.

II. The misery resulting from this apostacy; which will appear, by considering,

What man lost.

1. His original righteousness. The Spirit retired, grace expired, as necessarily as light disappears when the sun withdraws.

2. His communion with God. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

3. His inward peace. Gen. iii. 10.

4. His hope of heaven, and put himself out of the way to it.

What man became subject to.

6. He was universally depraved; because a slave to sin.

2. Fell under the tyranny of Satan. Eph. ii. 2.

3. Exposed to the wrath of God. Matt. iii. 7.

4. To the accusations of a guilty conscience. Prov. xviii. 14.

5. To the curse of the law. Gal. iii. 10.

6. Exposed to death, with all the pains that lead to it. Verse 19.

7. Condemned to hell.

III. Vindicate the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, in relation to man's apostacy.

1. Lay it down as a sure and general ground that God is righteous in all his ways. Ps. cxlv. 17.

2. When man was made at first, it may be said with equal propriety, as when created anew, "by the grace of God I am what I am." 1 Cor. xv. 10.

3. Man being a rational creature, and capable of serving God by love and choice, for the discovery of these it was not fit that he should in the same instant be brought out of nothing, into a confirmed state of holiness, but kept for a time upon a state of trial and probation, and so be entitled to the reward promised, or the punishment threatened.

4. He had power sufficient to stand, and was under strong obligations to do so, made in God's image, (Gen. i. 26.) and had the most alluring promise to encourage obedience.

5. The temptation with which he was assaulted might have been easily repelled. Gen. iii. 1.

6. God knew the great ends he would serve in permitting this fall. Magnify his grace to perishing sinners; send his Son to save the lost, his Spirit to reco-

ver the divine image, deliver from eternal wrath, raise to heaven, and advance his glory.

Improvement.

1. How mutable is the best creature, if left to itself.
2. How different a thing is sin in reality from what it appears, and the sinner apprehends when he ventures upon it. Prov. viii. 36.
3. Was man in innocence so soon betrayed? what reason have we to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation.
4. Is the misery so great into which man fell by sin? how dear should be the name of a Saviour, how desirable an interest in him!

CHRIST'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN.

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lift up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, &c.
—Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

OUR blessed Lord is gone to heaven, not with a design to be always absent; but to return, and take his people to himself. The heavens must contain him till the restitution of all things; but then he will come from thence; and it is the character of his friends to be looking for him, as they have abundant reason to love his appearing. The manner of his appearing in general is foretold by the angel to his followers who were gazing after him in his ascent. (Acts i. 11.) And how that was is here recorded, as to several circumstances which cannot but be of comfortable consideration to his sincere followers. "And he led them out," &c.

From these words we may consider,

I. That when our blessed Saviour left this world, he parted with his disciples, did not take them with him. For,

1. Believers are not made such merely for themselves, but to serve the Redeemer's interest in the world, and promote his glory. Matt. v. 13—16.

2. Our Lord upon his going away does not insist upon his disciples immediately following after, (John xvii. 11.) but leaves them for awhile, for the display of his wisdom, goodness, &c. in directing them, &c. Ps. xxiii. 6.

3. The Christian is to have time to exercise and to improve his graces. (Rom. v. 2—5.) To grow into the stature of a perfect man. Eph. iv. 13.

4. Jesus glorified his Father by a life of service and suffering upon earth; and in this respect the servant is more or less to be like his Lord. John xii. 26.

II. Whither he went, when he left them; he was carried up into heaven.

1. To take possession of his own glory which he had from eternity. (John xvii. 5.) Discarding at the same time an anxious concern for his followers whom he left behind. Verse 24.

1. As a triumphant conqueror over sin, Satan, death, and hell. Eph. iv. 8—10.

3. To make way for the descent of the Spirit, the Comforter. John xvi. 7.

4. As our great High Priest, to plead the merit of his sacrifice in behalf of the guilty. Heb. vii. 25.

5. As our forerunner, to take possession of heaven for his people, and make all things ready for their arrival. John xx. 17; xiv. i. 2.

III. The manner in which he parted with them;

blessing them, "while he was blessing them," &c. perhaps by praying for them, as Isaac, (Gen. xxvii. 28.) or Jacob. (Gen. xlviii. 16.) Or in a way of authority, pronouncing a blessing on them. He blessed them.

1. In conformity to his character and work. It was foretold. (Ps. lxxii. 17.) He was sent for this purpose. (Acts iii. 25, 26.) With this he opened his ministry. (Matt. v.) And with this he left this world.

2. To convince them that his gifts and calling were without repentance. (Rom. ii. 29.) That he is the same yesterday, &c. (Heb. xiii. 8.) That he loves them to the end. John xiii. 1.

3. To give them the fullest assurance, that he did not go away displeased with them; that he had forgiven all defects and unfaithfulness. He blessed them, as a Father, his children; as a Master, his servants; as a King, his subjects; as a Shepherd, his flock; as a Saviour, his ransomed ones.

4. On this day especially, as being a day of joy and gladness to himself. He had lately been humbled, and crucified; he was now going to be exalted, crowned, and enthroned. And from the most affectionate regard to them, to wipe the falling tear, by the remembrance of the endearing manner in which he took his leave of them.

5. To let them know that he was still theirs; that they were still thorough objects of his dearest love; that they might still think and speak of him, when out of sight.

6. To comfort and strengthen their minds against the hard treatment they were to meet with from the world after his departure; that they might cleave to him, and trust in him.

Application.

1. Reflect on the separation between Christ and his disciples as being but for a little time: they will soon meet again. John xvi. 22.

2. Endeavour that this separation be as little as possible: often think and speak of him, as a friend you dearly love. 1 Pet. i. 8.

3. In his bodily absence, be grateful for the presence of his Spirit.

4. Think with pleasure on the happy change of his circumstances, raised from the deepest abasement, to the highest glory.

5. Let this confirm us in the faith of the fulness of his sacrifice, and triumph in it. Rom. viii. 33, &c.

6. Let it encourage our approaches to the throne of grace. Heb. iv. 14. 16.

7. Is he in heaven, then his interest shall live upon earth; he shall see the travail of his soul. Isa. liii. 10, 11.

8. Is he in heaven, let our hearts be there, till he comes to receive us to himself. John ii. 28; xiv. 3.

SUBMISSION TO GOD IN AFFLICTION.

And Aaron held his peace.—Levit. x. 3.

THESE words shew the becoming behaviour of a servant of God under a very great and sore affliction, who, through divine assistance, stilled the murmurings of nature, and replied nothing against God; he held his peace. Observe,

I. That the children of God are sometimes liable to

severe affliction ; both personal and relative. David complains. Ps. xxxviii. 2 ; Job ix. 17 ; 2 Cor. v. 4. And it is in heaven only where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes. (Rev. vii. 17.) The blessed God intends by their afflictions, their advantage in time and eternity.

1. He never afflicts till there is a real necessity.
1 Peter iv. 16.

2. In wisdom. Heb. xii. 9, 10.

3. In measure. 1 Cor. x. 13.

4. In love and tenderness. Prov. iii. 12 ; Heb. xii. 5, 6 ; Rev. iii. 19.

5. To purify our hearts and affections. Heb. xii. 10.

6. To save us from condemnation. 1 Cor. ii. 32 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

7. They are but light and momentary. Ps. xxx. 5 ; Isa. liv. 7, 8 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

II. What is implied in being silent in trials and afflictions.

Not a careless indifference. (Heb. xii. 5.) Nor a sullen, daring obstinacy. (Jer. v. 3.) Nor a restraint of prayer before God. Nor a restraint of communication to a real friend. Job xix. 22. But,

1. A deep sense of God's hand in what we suffer. Ps. xxxix. 9 ; Isa. xxxviii. 15 ; 1 Sam. ii. 6.

2. An humble acquiescence in the justice of his proceedings.

3. A resigning ourselves to his pleasure. Matt. xvi. 39.

4. Acknowledging his right in us, to do as he thinks best. Job i. 21.

III. Suggest some observations, with a view to induce to such a gracious temper of mind.

1. God has an unquestionable right to dispose of us, and ours, as he pleases. Rom. ix. 21, 22.

2. He grants many daily mercies which we do not deserve.

3. We have sinned against him. Mic. vii. 9.

4. The sufferings of Christ for us, were infinitely greater than ours. Isa. liii. 45 ; Heb. ii. 10.

5. We shall be adjudged unworthy to reign with him; if we do not suffer with him. Matt. x. 38, 39.

6. In afflicting his people, he has a view to his own glory. Levit. x. 3.

Improvement.

1. To be impatient under affliction, is unbecoming a child of God, considered as a new creature.

2. To oppose our wills to the will of God, is high presumption. Isa. vi. 9.

3. It is inconsistent with our own prayers.

4. It would subject us to the charge of ingratitude to our best friend and benefactor, who hath drawn us to Christ; pardoned our sins; given us the Spirit of adoption; and made us heirs of a glorious immortality; and who is, by these very afflictions, preparing us for our heavenly state.

*THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE.

For what is the hope of the hypocrite, &c. Job xxvii. 8.

THESE are the words of holy Job; they were expressed in justification of himself, from the uncharitable censure cast upon him by his friends, the principal design of whose discourse was to prove, that he, and

all others afflicted like him, must be, if not openly profane, nothing better than a secret hypocrite. So far was he from indulging in any evil way, that he trembled at the thought of the state and end of those who did so. "For what is the hope," &c.

Consider,

I. To whom the character in the text applies. To all those, who in the concerns of religion act a different part, to what they really are. Particularly it applies,

1. To those who pretend entire devotedness to God, while their hearts are divided. Psalm xii. 2.

2. Who profess a regard to the will of God, as the reason, and his glory as the end of what they do in religion; while at the same time they act from other springs, and for lower and selfish ends. Matt. vi. 1.

3. Who are more careful to appear outwardly religious, than to be really so between God and their own souls. Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

4. Who put God off with bodily service, while the heart is not engaged in it. Isa. xxix. 13; John iv. 24.

5. Who are partial in their obedience to God, while the real Christian says, Psalm cxix. 128.

II. The hope and the gain of such a character.

1. Their hope relates to a future state of blessedness.

2. It is groundless, without a solid foundation. Col. i. 27.

3. It is fruitless. See the Christian's hope. 1 John iii. 3.

4. It will be cut off. Matt. vii. 23.

And this false hope is generally owing,

1. To ignorance of themselves; their own hearts.

2. To want of attention to the extent and spirituality of the law of God. Rom. vii. 9.

3. The favourable opinion others have of them,

4. Comparing themselves with open sinners, or lukewarm professors. Luke xviii. 11.

5. The length they go, as to the exercises of what appears to be grace; abstaining from many sins; practising many religious duties, &c.

As to their acquisitions; they may gain,

1. More of this world.

2. The esteem and applause of men.

3. A false peace. Rev. iii. 17.

4. A smooth passage through life.

5. A pompous funeral. But, behold,

III. The dreadful end of such; expressed in these words, "when God taketh away his soul."

1. His soul, his immortal part, which he has deceived and ruined.

2. God will take it away; whose power there is no resisting; from whose presence there is no escape.

3. He will take it away; perhaps with violence (Prov. xiv. 32.), always in displeasure.

4. Take it away from present gains, and hopes, to real misery, and to the greatest share of it. To all this he is continually liable, and at no time safe from it. While he is crying peace, peace, sudden destruction is coming upon him.

Improvement.

1. Seriously examine as to your own character: "judge yourselves, that ye be not judged."

2. Dread nothing more than the hypocrite's hope, and frequently look to the foundation of your own.

3. Bless God if you can give a reason for the hope that is in you; but do it with fear and trembling; the final judgment is not yet over.

4. Do nothing to sink your hope, or fill you with overwhelming fear. Think often what you hope for, whom you hope in, and of the ground you hope upon; and thus prepare for the fruition of your hope in eternal glory.

THE CHRISTIAN WEARY OF LIFE.

I loathe it, I would not live always.—Job vii. 16.

THESE are the words of holy Job. In the bitterness of his soul he expresses his desire to God, rather to be dismissed from this world, than to stay any longer in it.

Let us consider,

1. Why the real Christian would not always live in this world.

1. Not because of his sufferings, although a Christian may through the pressure of affliction, and the strength of temptation rashly wish to die. (Jonah iv. 3.) This cannot be justified. But,

2. The Christian would not live here always; Because it is the will of God he should not. (Gen. iii. 19; Job xxx. 23.) he consults the will of his God living and dying. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

3. From a concern and zeal for the glory of God; his soul breathes after a state of things, where God is universally acknowledged, adored, loved, and served. Rev. vii. 9, 10.

4. From that love he feels to Christ, he is willing to depart; to be for ever with the object of his affection. Phil. i. 23.

5. From a desire to be conformed to the example of

his Lord. (1 John iv. 17.) He came into this world, not to abide, but to return. John xvii. 5.

6. Feeling the evils of the present state ; and having the prospect of a better ; making a just comparison of the value of each ; he would not live always. Eccl. i. 14. 4.

7. Having some foretastes of a better world ; his attachment to earth is weakened ; his desire of immortality increased ; he would not live always ; he pants after the fulness. Psalm xxxiv. 8 ; and xvi. 11.

II. What does such a declaration imply ; that those who use it aright, are in a good degree prepared to die ; inasmuch as death cannot be an object of desire, but of dread, to an unprepared soul. And this preparation implies,

1. A deep repentance for sin. Luke xiii. 3.

2. A lively faith in Christ Jesus. Mark xvi. 16.

3. The forgiveness of sin, a consciousness of it. Col. i. 14.

4. Adoption into God's family. Rom. viii. 15.

5. The regeneration of our fallen nature. Tit. iii. 5.

III. To whom may a Christian thus express himself.

1. To God by way of appeal ; as Peter, John xxi. 17.

2. To our fellow-Christians ; to make known to them the real state of our souls ; for their satisfaction as to our sincerity ; for God's glory. Psalm lxvi. 16.

3. To ourselves ; as a satisfactory evidence of our sincerity ; and our love to Jesus Christ. Ps. ciii. 1, 2.

Application.

1. How admirable is the change which the grace of God makes in the Christian ! He is saved from the love of life, and the fear of death. 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

2. What gratitude is due to God for his gospel, by
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which life and immortality are brought to light ! We could never have been willing to part with life, but for the promise and prospect of heaven. 1 Peter i. 3—5.

3. As ever any of you would say upon good grounds, I would not live always, i. e. here ; make sure work for a better state of things. Amos iv. 12.

GOD'S CONSOLATIONS IN AFFLICTION.

Are the consolations of God small with thee?

Job xv. 11.

THESE are the words of Eliphaz to Job, upbraiding him with his temper and conduct in his afflictions ! he charges him with great impiety ; of *restraining prayer* and *uttering his iniquity*, &c. This charge, as it respected Job, was false and groundless ; but true, it is to be feared, of many others, who are continually poring on what God has laid upon them ; or taken from them ; while they suffer to pass unnoticed a thousand blessings which he is continually bestowing upon them. This is the evil which Eliphaz exposes, as if it was in Job : and assuredly every good man should always guard against it. *Are the consolations of God small with thee?*

Let us consider,

1. The consolations of God.

Consolation is said to be God's, as he is the fountain of it, and all true consolation comes from him.

1. By way of eminency. No comforts like those that come from him ; they are the beginnings of heaven.

2. By way of sovereign disposal. None can comfort but God ; none like him ; without, or in opposi-

tion to him. Jer. ii. 13; Isa. li. 12; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4; vii. 6; Luke ii. 25.

3. The consolations of God denote their fulness and variety. Psalm lxxi. 21; Isa. li. 3.

4. Their power and efficacy. (Job xxxviii. 28, 29; Isa. lxvi. 13.) No trouble or distress can ever balance the consolations of God.

II. When may it be said that the consolations of God are small with the Christian in his affliction? What are the circumstances which indicate this defect?

1. When they are ready to *faint* under their afflictions.

2. When they grow impatient under them; discovering a want of resignation to God's will.

3. When we have recourse to any other method for ease and deliverance from trouble, than that which God has appointed; waiting upon and looking to him.

4. When we are full of anxious thought, *what will become of us*, if our afflictions are continued, or be increased?

And O, how apt are the very best of men to faint in the day of adversity; as if they had never known any thing of divine consolation: and this may be owing,

1. To the *great weight* of affliction itself. How feelingly does Job speak of this: chap. vi. 2—4; Psalm lx. 3.

2. The weakness and imperfection of grace, and the strength of remaining corruption. Their thoughts held down to what they suffer, and wholly taken up about it; their minds so confused and afflicted, that they are ready to think God their enemy; and begin to question his love, instead of regarding his comforts. Isa. li. 14.

III. Point out the evil of not paying a proper attention to the consolations of God under afflictions. They are *great* in themselves, and ought not to be *small* to us.

1. The consolations in God are great. Arising from his *nature* and *perfections*, and the relations in which he stands to his people. All these are the fountain of a believer's consolation : his infinite wisdom, power, goodness, compassion, faithfulness, love, every where and unchangeable. (Jer. xxxi. 12.) He is their God. Ps. xlviii. 14.

2. *From God*, are great ; arising from the provision he hath made for us, in his Son. (John i. 16 ; Luke ii. 25.) By his *Spirit*, whose name and office is the Comforter. (John xiv. 16.) By his *Word* ; its promises, which are the believer's song in the house of his pilgrimage : promises of pardon, justification, sanctification, safe conduct through life, and heaven hereafter. By his *Ordinances* ; from his presence in them ; and influence upon them ; leading them to say, It is good for me to draw nigh to God ; a day in his courts is better than a thousand any where else.

3. *With God*. 1 Cor. ii. 9 ; Ps. xxxi. 19.

Application.

1. It is matter of astonishment that we, who have rebelled against God, should have any consolation from him : he deals not with us according to our sins.

2. Is it so great an evil to treat the consolations of God as being *small* ? let his afflicted children beware of this, by giving way to immoderate dejection and sorrow.

3. Let God have the glory of any consolation you may have received, and do yet enjoy.

4. Under all your troubles make conscience of applying to God, through your Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ, as the fountain of all consolation.

THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS, DIFFICULT.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, &c.

1 Peter iv. 18.

THESE words are very important and interesting both to the saint and sinner. To the former, they shew the necessity of great care in the concerns of religion; of watchfulness and circumspection; while to the latter they are awfully alarming.

Let us consider,

I. The character of the persons here spoken of; the *righteous*; the *ungodly* sinner.

The righteous.

1. None are such *legally*. Rom. iii. 10; Job ix. 15.

2. They are such as have believed in Christ; are pardoned and justified. Rom. iii. 25, 26.

3. They delight in the law of the Lord. Ps. i. 2; Rom. vii. 22.

4. Sin has not dominion over them. Rom. vi. 14; and viii. 2.

5. God is the object of their supreme affection. Ps. lxxiii. 25.

6. And from a sense of their own imperfections they rely on Christ for eternal life. Phil. iii. 8, 9.

The ungodly sinner.

They are such as remain in their native, unconverted state. Particularly, they are such,

1. Over whom Satan exercises an uncontrolled dominion. Ephes. ii. 2.

2. Alienated from the life of God. Ephes. iv. 18.

3. Placing their affections on the world. Luke xii. 20.

4. Without God in the world. Ephes. ii. 12.

5. Rebellion against God. Rom. i. 28—32.

6. Neglecting; perhaps rejecting the only way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Heb. ii. 3; and x. 28, 29.

II. The difficulty of the salvation of the righteous.

The text admits that the righteous shall be saved; their salvation is *certain*, upon their being found faithful unto death.

1. The testimony of scripture secures it. 2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 17; 1 Peter i. 3—5.

2. This is the purpose of God concerning them. 2 Thess. ii. 13.

3. It was the ultimate end of Christ's sufferings. Heb. ii. 10.

4. Of his ascension into heaven. Heb. vi. 20.

5. God hath promised it. Rev. ii. 10.

6. The work of salvation in the righteous is already begun. Phil. i. 6.

Nevertheless, their salvation is here represented as being with difficulty obtained.

1. This difficulty is not owing to any *deficiency* in the love of God, which is universal. John iii. 16.

2. Nor in the death and merit of Christ, which is infinite. Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2.

3. Nor in the influence of the Spirit. John xiv. 16, 17; xvi. 7, 8. But it is owing chiefly,

4. To the difficulty of the work they have got to do. Tit. ii. 11—14.

5. The opposition they meet with from the world.

6. The influence of evil example which abounds in the world. John xv. 19.

7. The opposition they meet with from Satan. 1 Pet. v. 8.

8. The remains of corruption within.

9. The instability of some Christians. James i. 8; and the apostasy of others. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

III. The certain and dreadful misery that awaits the ungodly sinner. The question in the text relating to such may refer,

1. To a time of popular calamity. Luke xxi. 25, 26.

2. To death.

3. To the day of judgment. What will they do when Christ shall be revealed, &c. (2 Thess. i. 7—9.) When sentence is pronounced. (Matt. xxv. 41.) In that awful place.

4. Their punishment will be universal, soul and body.

5. Acute, in the extreme. Rev. xiv. 10.

6. Uninterrupted, without mitigation or respite.

7. Without end. Rev. xiv. 11.

Improvement.

1. Is the world divided into the two classes here named: of how much importance is it to know, to which we belong, especially as their ends are so extremely different.

2. Is the salvation of the righteous difficult; let them hence learn the necessity of diligence and watchfulness. 2 Peter i. 10.

3. Let the wicked tremble for the consequences of their conduct. Should they live and die such, their destruction is inevitable.

CHRIST, THE SHEPHERD OF HIS FLOCK.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, &c.—Isa. xl. 11.

THIS chapter begins with a command from God to his servants the prophets, relative to that glorious work in which he intended to employ them. (v. 1 & 2.) And when comfort is to be preached. Christ predicted, is to be the text, of whom we have here an endearing description, both as to the relation he stands in to his people, and as to the manner in which he would manifest it when he came. He shall feed, &c.

Consider,

I. The character of Christ as here expressed, a Shepherd. He is called,

1. The Shepherd of souls. 1 Pet. ii. 25.
2. The great Shepherd of the sheep. Heb. xiii. 20.
3. The good Shepherd. John x. 11.
4. He was called by the Father to this office and trust. (Ezek. xxxiv. 23.) My Shepherd, says God. Zech. xiii. 7.
5. He knows his sheep: (John x. 14.) their persons, wants, &c.
6. He seeks them. Luke xix. 10; John x. 16.
7. He puts his mark upon them; his image, and is not ashamed of them. Heb. ii. 11.
8. Takes care of them; instructs them; watches over them; defends them.
9. He guides them. John x. 3, 4.
10. He provides for them. John x. 9.
11. Presents them at last to his Father. Heb. ii. 13; John vi. 30.

II. The conduct of Christ towards his people; he

feeds his flock, &c. By whom we are to understand all true believers. (John x. 26, 27.) They are called a flock, to express,

1. Their separation from the world. John xv. 19.
2. Their association with each other, for Christian fellowship. (Mal. iii. 16.) Many little flocks in different parts, fed by under shepherds; but all under the eye and care of the Great Shepherd.

3. Their mutual love to, and defence of, each other, and the cause of true religion. John xv. 17; Jude iii.

4. In Christ's flock there are lambs; converts, young in years, and grace, called elsewhere, babes. (1 Pet. ii. 2.) Those who are with young; believers exercised with severe trials, and heavy laden; or penitents mourning their sins, brought to the birth and ready to bring forth.

Jesus feeds his flock, &c.

And this food is spiritual; they have meat to eat the world knows not of (John iv. 32.); and of this there is great variety.

1. He feeds his flock with his word. The sacred pages are green pastures. Ps. xxiii. 2; xlii. 1. 2; cxix. 103; 1 Pet. ii. 2.

2. By the influences of his Spirit. John xvi. 14.

3. With himself. John vi. 48—56.

4. By the dispensations of his providence. John x. 9.

5. By afflictions. Isa. xxvii. 9; Heb. xii. 11.

6. And he pays particular attention to those who want it most. The lambs, who, through want of experience; the remains of corruption; temptations; opposition from the world; unwatchfulness, are apt to go astray, he gathers with his arm, and even, with the

greatest affection, carries in his bosom. Those who are with young, he gently leads, by the influences of his Spirit, to the promises of his word, for comfort, strength, and deliverance. Matt. xii. 20; Heb. iv. 15, &c.

7. And after Christ has thus cared for, and fed his flock for a time, he will lead them to his kingdom, where he will eternally feed, and feast them with the higher entertainments of that celestial state, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Rev. xix. 9.

GOD'S GRACE SUFFICIENT UNDER TEMPTATION.

My grace is sufficient for thee.—2 Cor. xii. 9.

THE apostle having been caught up to the third heaven, where he had heard unspeakable words, tells us what happened to him, after his coming back, ver. 7. Whatever Satan may design, or the Christian may feel from him, it is to prevent a greater evil, and to do him good, that the Lord permits Satan to attack him.

Under all assaults from hell, the children of God are to send up their cries to heaven, ver. 8. And although deliverance is not immediately obtained, they have the promise of God, that in the mean time his grace shall be sufficient for them.

We may consider,

I. That it is no uncommon thing for the people of God to be tempted by Satan.

1. The apostle himself was tempted, ver. 7.
2. Pious Job. Chap. i. 12.

3. The apostle Peter. Luke xxii. 31.

4. Our blessed Saviour. Matt. iv. 1, &c.

5. And every believer must expect it, if he would fight his way after his Lord, and obtain the victory. Rev. iii. 21.

6. It is in relation to this, that such Scriptures as these are given. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9; Eph. vi. 11—16.

II. The Lord permits this for wise ends.

1. To prevent pride, or to mortify it, if it has got possession of the soul. Verse 7.

2. To correct them for their faults, that they may be more watchful, and given to prayer in future.

3. For the trial of their graces; it was so with Job. James v. 11.

4. To magnify his power. Isa. xl. 20.

III. The promise of assistance, "My grace," &c. this will be sufficient.

1. To restrain the tempter's rage, both as to degree and continuance. "Thus far thou shalt go," &c. See Job i. 12; ii. 6.

2. To assure them, that their trials shall be proportioned to their strength. 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. To keep their faith from falling under the sorest trials; and, while we lay hold of the Head, he will hold us, and keep us from sinking.

4. To deliver them from the evil that Satan intends and which Christians may sometimes fear, that they shall be finally overcome and perish.

5. To put an end to the conflict in the fittest season. Rom. xvi. 20.

6. To bring every believer to heaven, where Satan and his messengers can have no place.

7. And this they have good reason to expect, from their relation to God as his children. He is their Fa-

ther, and their interest in Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, and merciful High-Priest, who has passed into the heavens on their account. Heb. ix. 24.

Improvement.

1. We see, that it is no unusual thing for Christians to be buffeted by Satan; on this account, as well as others, the redeemed in glory have come out of great tribulation. Rev. vii. 14.

2. Beware of entertaining hard thoughts of God and Christ, if not presently delivered from temptation.

3. Get and keep faith in exercise, which is the shield by which all the fiery darts of the devil are to be quenched: that so you may obtain a decisive victory, and obtain the crown that fadeth not away. "And now the God of all grace," &c. 1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

DEATH'S FINAL DESTRUCTION.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

1 Cor. xv. 2.

In the preceding verse it is said of Christ, that he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: in these words, assurance is given that all his, and his people's enemies shall be subdued; and, in the text, one of the most formidable of these is mentioned, who shall in the end feel his conquering power. "The last enemy," &c.

I. Take notice of the enemy here spoken of, *death*; and what kind of an enemy he is.

1. Death is an enemy, as he separates the soul from the body, intimately acquainted, long united.

2. As he puts an end to our state of probation. We

are on trial for another world, and death ends that trial.

3. As to what follows upon it: the decay and corruption of the body. Eccl. xii. 7.

4. He is a common enemy; to young and old, rich and poor, saint and sinner. Eccl. iii. 20.

5. Concealed; we cannot say *how* he will attack us, or *when*; slowly or rapidly, sleeping or waking.

6. Powerful and irresistible. Eccl. viii. 8.

7. Inexorable. Wealth cannot bribe, eloquence persuade, cries or entreaties move, holiness awe, or otherwise prevail with him to spare!

8. Formidable as to his forerunners, sickness and pain. (Job xxxiii. 19, &c.) As it is a leaving this world, friends, relations, employments, &c. (Eccl. ix. 10.) As it is a passage into an endless state.

II. The comfort suggested here to the Christian, that this enemy shall finally be destroyed.

Death is the Christian's last enemy, which implies,

1. That he has got other enemies; the devil, the world, and the flesh; but death is the last. He must encounter with the king of terrors, and finish the conflict by dying.

2. Whatever enemies may go before, death, to the Christian, will be the last; after this the warfare will be over. Not so the wicked: there will be an offended God, and an everlasting hell afterward.

He is to be destroyed,

1. By the general resurrection. John v. 28, 29.

2. Christ, the Captain of our salvation, is to accomplish ~~the~~ destruction. Hosea xiii. 14,

And destroyed last.

1. The power of the world, Satan, and sin, with re-

spect to the Christian shall be completely destroyed before he leaves this world. Heb. xii. 14. And,

2. Death shall be destroyed in the world to come, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. 2 Cor. v. 4.

Improvement.

1. Let not the Christian be unwilling to yield his body to the power of death; that power will soon be destroyed. Hosea xiii. 14.

2. Let us look forward with joyful expectation of seeing our Christian friends again, who, for a season are subject to the power of this enemy, where we shall triumph in eternal victory and eternal joy. Rev. i. 5, 6.

ADVANTAGE OF SEEKING THE LORD.

But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.—Psalm xxxiv. 10.

THE belief of God's special care and providence over good men, is a source of great comfort to those who are walking with him: and that they have ground for such a faith is evident from the words of the text: "They shall not want any good thing." How cheering is this declaration to the Christian, in the midst of his straits and difficulties. That we may apply comfort to whom it is due, let us consider,

I. The characters of the persons who seek the Lord. In general, they are such as are born of God, and so seek him.

1. As one whose favour they prefer to every other consideration. Ps. lxxiii. 25.

2. In his Son, through whom alone they can have access to God. John xiv. 6.

3. In obedience to his commandment, and upon the encouragement of his promise. Ps. xxvii. 8; Isa. xlv. 19.

4. In the use of all the appointed means.

5. With their whole heart. Ps. cxix. 10; Jer. xxix. 13.

6. With diligent perseverance. Matt. vii. 7, 8.

7. In a dependance upon the assistance of the Spirit. Rom. viii. 26.

8. In hope of seeing him above, which animates all their endeavours, and keeps them from sinking under apparent delays. Lam. iii. 26; Ps. xxiv. 6.

II. The promise of supply he has made to such :

“They shall not want any good thing.” Even as respects temporal blessings, so far as will be for their good, and the glory of God; but especially spiritual blessings, which they prefer above all others. Such as,

1. The light of God’s countenance. Ps. xi. 7; xxxiv. 15.

2. The protection of his arm. Ps. xc. 1.

3. His presence in affliction. Isa. xli. 10.

4. Seasonable deliverance. 2 Peter ii. 9; Ps. xci. 15.

5. The conduct of his providence. Ps. xxv. 12; xxxii. 8.

6. Acceptance at the throne of his grace. Prov. xv. 8.

7. And thus seeking the Lord in their passage to eternity, they shall be guided by his counsel, even unto death, and afterward received unto his glory. Ps. lxxiii. 24.

III. From whence we may infer this supply.

1. From his love to us in the gift of his Son. Rom: viii. 32.

2. From the relations in which he stands to us; a shepherd (Ps. xxiii. 1.); a father (Matt. vii. 11.); a God. Jer. xxx. 22, &c.

3. From his infinite fulness of power and goodness.

4. From his gracious promise. Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19; Jer. xxxii. 41.

5. From his extensive care over creatures of an inferior order. Matt. vi. 26. 28. 30.

Application.

1. How happy is the state of those that seek the Lord! Ps. xxiv. 5, 6.

2. How miserable the state of those who live at a distance from God! Ps. xxxiv. 16; lxxiii. 27.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL, A GROUND OF COMFORT.

Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction.—Ps. cxix. 92.

THIS psalm is by far the longest in the book; and as it is long, so it is excellent and engaging. It commends the Scriptures, or word of God, to us under several notions; as his statutes, judgments, precepts, testimonies, and here he calls it his law. David found it of use to him at all times, and now he speaks of the advantage he had received from it in the time of distress: "Unless thy law," &c.

I. Consider who they are that delight in the law of the Lord, and what that comfort is which it affords.

Those who delight in the law of the Lord, are his children, they do, and none else; for none but the children of God are prepared to receive that comfort which it affords. For,

1. They only are enlightened to discover its excellency, and the comfort it affords; to others it is sealed. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

2. They have the highest value for it. Ps. xix. 10; cxix. 97.

3. They have felt its glorious effects upon their minds, making them what they are. 1 Peter i. 23.

4. Their hearts and ways are suited to the word of God, to receive its consolation. Rom. viii. 5.

The consolation which it affords,

1. Is divine. The consolation of God, from his word, Spirit, heaven.

2. Solid and real. Not in name only, or fancied or imaginary; yet better felt than expressed. Ps. cxix. 14.

3. Rationable and justifiable. 1 Peter iii. 13.

4. Holy. Comes from a holy word, Spirit, and leads to greater degrees of holiness. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

5. Sometimes vigorous and strong. Heb. vi. 18.

6. The foretaste of heaven leading the soul upwards to that fulness of joy, &c. Ps. xvi. 11.

II. The benefit resulting from those comforts: we are preserved from perishing in our affliction, sinking under it into despondency.

The law of the Lord discovers to us,

1. That suffering has been the lot of the best men, our Lord not excepted.

2. That afflictions are consistent with God's love to his people. Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33.

3. That afflictions are even proofs of his love. Heb. xii. 6, 7.

4. That afflictions, occasioned by unfaithfulness, are designed not only to punish, but to cure. Isa. xxvii. 9; Ps. cxix. 67; Heb. xii. 6, 7.

5. That at such seasons the Lord has been pleased to grant unusual communications of grace. Hosea ii. 1.

6. And lastly, The word of the Lord teaches the afflicted Christian that God will be with him when he is dying (Isa. xliii. 2; Ps. xxiii. 4.); and that he shall be with God for ever. And thus it is that the delights of the law of the Lord preserve the afflicted Christian from perishing.

Application.

1. Is there so much in the word of God to delight the soul? What an inestimable blessing is the Bible to the world and the church! Let us bless God for it; and frequently, with the greatest attention, read and meditate upon its contents.

2. Let us all strive to be of the number of his children, who are prepared to take the comfort of it.

3. Under all our troubles, let us have recourse to God's word for relief, praying for the Spirit's influence to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of that word, that so we may receive the comfort it suggests.

THE MINISTER'S PARTING BLESSING.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
Amen.—Rev. xxii. 21.

THE dispensation of the law was greatly inferior to the dispensation of the gospel : that was a dispensation of terror and of shadows ; this of mercy and truth. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ:" and it is very remarkable, that the Old Testament ends with a curse, the New Testament with a blessing. "The grace," &c.

Consider,

I. What we are to understand by "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The term *grace* is various in its signification. We are to understand it as expressive,

1. Of God's eternal favour to mankind. 2 Tim. i. 9.
2. Of God's special approbation of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Rom. v. 2.
3. Of the loving-kindness of Jesus Christ in dying for sinners. 2 Cór. viii. 9.
4. Of the work of the Spirit in those who believe, changing and renewing their nature ; and this is the meaning of it in the text ; and nothing short of this can enable a person to reply to the intimation of Christ's second coming, in verse 20, "Amen, even so come Lord Jesus !"

And this grace is called, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. As it is purchased by him. John i. 17.
2. Treasured up in him. Col. i. 19.
3. And received from him. John i. 16.

II. The apostle wishes true believers to possess this grace, as the most excellent blessing they can enjoy: and this will appear when we consider,

1. That it distinguishes them from fallen angels. 2 Pet. ii. 4.
2. From the rest of mankind. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; 1 John v. 19; 1 Cor. ii. 12.
3. From their former selves. Eph. ii. 1, 2. 12, 13.
4. That it ennobles the soul. 2 Pet. i. 4.
5. Enriches it. Luke xvi. 11; Col. ii. 2.
6. Sanctifies it. Eph. ii. 8.
7. Leads the soul to Christ. Ps. xvii. 15.
8. And it shall finally terminate in the eternal enjoyment of him. John xiv. 2, 3.

III. Consider the import of the apostle's wish, as it respects this grace being with you all.

1. In youth, as well as old age.
2. In sickness, as well as health.
3. In poverty, as well as riches.
4. In pain, as well as ease.
5. In life, and in death.

Application.

1. Let those who are destitute of this grace, see the necessity of it; to save them from sin, make them happy, and prepare them for heaven.

2. Let those who enjoy it, improve it by continual exercise; and in this case they may expect a glorious increase. Mark iv. 25.

MEN, AS STEWARDS TO GOD, ACCOUNTABLE.

Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.—Luke xvi. 2.

THESE words are part of a parable, delivered by our Lord; a method of instruction which he frequently made use of during his stay upon earth. The design of our Lord, in this parable, is to excite mankind to the greatest care and diligence in improving their advantages in relation to a future state, from the consideration of a future judgment, when it will be said, "Give an account," &c.

We may consider,

I. That every individual sustains the character of a steward, and as such, an important trust is committed to his care.

1. Reason and understanding. Job xxxii. 8.

2. Time, in which to work out our own salvation, and prepare for eternity. Phil. ii. 12.

3. Bodily health and strength, which qualify for great services in the cause of God.

4. Wealth and riches, with which to do good. Luke xvi. 9.

5. The word and ordinances. Ps. lxxiii. 28.

6. Grace implanted in the heart.

II. That the time of our stewardship will have an end.

1. It will certainly end at death. Some of our talents may be taken from us while we live; reason, health, and riches! But should we be favoured with them as long as we live, our stewardship must end at

death: with our last breath our probation ends. Eccl. ix. 10; Heb. ix. 27.

2. It may end suddenly. (Matt. xxiv. 44.) Our times are in God's hand, and he may cut them off when he pleases.

3. Our stewardship once ended, shall never be renewed again. We must be no longer stewards; no more time allowed, no more means of grace, &c.

III. An account of our stewardship shall be required; "Give an account," &c.

1. Each individual must give an account for himself, of *thy* stewardship. Rom. xiv. 12.

2. To Christ, as Judge. Acts xvii. 31.

3. Of our stewardship. The talents we received, whether they were employed, hid, improved, or wasted. Eccl. xii. 14.

4. And this will be the case immediately upon our going out of our stewardship; upon the dissolution of the soul and body. (Eccl. xii. 7.) Most solemnly at the last day. 2 Cor. v. 10.

Improvement.

1. If we are stewards, how unreasonable to be proud of any talent we possess: we are to be judged for all.

2. How awful will it be, if any of us, as stewards, should receive the grace of God in vain. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

3. As our stewardship will end, what attention should we pay to our character and work, as such.

4. What an awful thing it is to die, to appear before God, to give an account of ourselves, &c.

5. Let not the believer faint under the difficulties of his stewardship, seeing it will have an end, and as to him, a most desirable end; and neither the services nor sufferings of the present time are to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed.

THE CHRISTIAN WITH GOD, SUPPORTED BY HIM.

Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand.—Ps. lxxiii. 23.

THESE are the words of the Psalmist, just recovering from a deep and sore distress, which he describes in the foregoing verses at large, with the occasion of it. He consoles himself with the reflection, that, in his greatest distress he had been with his God, and his God had graciously supported him: "Nevertheless I am," &c.

1. What is implied in being continually with God.

As a duty, it implies,

That this is peculiar to real Christians; as they alone are prepared for it, and disposed to it, as being acquainted with him, reconciled to him, and in a state of the most intimate friendship with him. (Amos iii.

3.) Many things tend to engage such, in point of duty, thus to be with him.

1. It is God's express command. Gen. xvii. 1.

2. Their covenant-consent strengthens the obligation (Jer. i. 5.); and having opened their mouths they cannot go back.

3. The honour of God, which of all things is the dearest to them, obliges them to it. To forsake him would be a reflection on God and his ways.

4. To this they feel the constraints of love, verse 25.

5. The blessedness arising from it, and the misery resulting from a contrary conduct, is a farther obligation to this.

6. The sincerity of their love and attachment to God is thereby to be evidenced.

7. And they feel themselves deeply concerned thus to act, as they would not lose their work and their crown, and expose themselves to greater wrath. 2 John 8; Heb. x. 38.

As a privilege it implies, that they are with God.

1. As members of his Son. 1 Cor. xii. 27.

2. As his children. Rom. viii. 14.

3. As his heirs. Rom. viii. 14.

4. As his portion. Deut. xxxii. 9.

5. As his living temple. Eph. ii. 21.

II. The happiness resulting therefrom: the Lord holds them by their right hand. This is necessary.

1. On account of the weakness of their graces. 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2.

2. The remains of the carnal mind. 1 Cor. iii. 3.

3. The prevalence of evil example. 1 Cor. v. 3.

4. The opposition of the world. John xv. 19.

5. The unwearied diligence of Satan. 1 Pet. v. 8.

6. And in all these circumstances God will uphold them, according to his word and promise. Heb. xiii. 3; Isa. liv. 17.

Improvement.

1. How happy is the state of those who walk with God! Let us cultivate a greater intimacy than ever.

2. How dreadful is the state of those who are at a distance from God! Ps. lxxiii. 27.

THE MUTUAL INTEREST BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS.

My beloved is mine, and I am his. Cant. ii. 16.

This book is a song of love, and these are some of the sweetest expressions of it.

They are the church's triumph in Christ, by an appropriating faith, feeling the happiness arising from an interest in him : " My beloved," &c.

Consider,

1. The nature of that relation which subsists between Christ and believers.

As to Christ, He is theirs,

1. By the appointment of the Father, and that from everlasting. 1 Pet. i. 20 ; Isa. xlii. 1. 6.

2. By his free and voluntary undertaking of their recovery. Isa. l. 5 ; Ps. xl. 6—8.

3. As having a regard to them in what he did and suffered. Eph. v. 22—24.

They are Christ's,

1. By the Father's gift (John xvii. 6.) ; as his charge to be ransomed by his blood, as his reward for his obedience.

2. By right of purchase. 1 Pet. i. 19.

3. By conquest. 2 Cor. x. 5.

4. By self-dedication—in the closet—after some affliction—at the Lord's table.

II. The ends of this mutual relation, on either side.

As to believers.

1. Christ is theirs to answer all the demands of justice, and deliver them from wrath.

2. To rescue them from the power of sin, and the tyranny of Satan. Rom. v. 9 ; 1 Thess. i. 10.

3. To bind up their wounded spirits, and speak peace to their troubled souls. Matt. xi. 28.

4. To restore them to God's favour. Rom. v. 1, 2.

5. To hear and answer their prayers, and to supply all their wants. John xiv. 13, 14.

6. To over-rule all things for their good, guide them

by his counsel even unto death, and afterwards receive them to glory. Matt. xxv. 34.

And, as to believers,

1. They are Christ's; to listen to, and learn of him, what they are to know, believe, and do, in order to salvation. Mark ix. 7.

2. To obey and please him, as the end for which he redeemed them. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; Phil. i. 21.

3. Entirely to depend on him for all they need, or hope for, as to this world or another. Isa. xlv. 24, 25.

4. To employ every talent they have received from him to his glory. Luke xix. 13.

5. To fight under him, as the Captain of their salvation. 1 Tim. vi. 12.

6. To love and delight in him while they live, and to enjoy him above for ever. When he proclaims from heaven, "Behold I come quickly;" the church replies "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Rev. xxii. 20.

Application.

1. How wonderful is the method of salvation by Jesus Christ! that the eternal Son of God should not only be given for us, but given to us!

2. From the mutual and endearing relation between Christ and believers: let it be remembered, that he observes what is done for, and against any of them, and takes it as done to himself. Matt. xxv. 40.

3. This may be considered as a confirmation of their faith, as to their resurrection, and future blessedness. Rom. viii. 11.

CHRIST'S DYING REQUEST FOR HIS FOLLOWERS.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.—John xvii. 24.

THESE are the words of our dying Redeemer, praying over his disciples when about to take his farewell of them to go to his Father. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, and discovered the most anxious concern for their happiness, as to both worlds. As he was now about to leave them, he commends them to the care of his Father, ver. 15. And looking up to heaven, whither he was seen to ascend, he with the most affectionate vehemence, thus interceded in their behalf, "Father, I will."

I. The character of the persons given by the Father to Christ.

If we examine the context, it will appear that those who are given to Christ,

1. Are such as have received and believed on him, having been previously exercised with a godly sorrow for sin. Ver. 8.

2. They are his disciples, his followers; and, as such, a people distinct from the men of the world, different in their views, principles, dispositions, conversation, conduct. Ver. 14.

And they are given to Christ,

1. That he may feed and nourish them. Isa. xl. 11.

2. That he may lead and conduct them. Isa.

lv. 4.

3. Protect and defend them. Isa. xxxii. 2.

4. Advocate their cause. 1 John ii. 1.

5. Save them from every evil. Matt. i. 21.

6. Receive them to glory. Matt. xxv. 34.

II. The will of Christ concerning them, that they should be with him where he is.

1. In heaven, mount Zion, the city of the living God, the everlasting kingdom, the celestial paradise, the third heaven, where is his temple, the throne of his presence. Rev. xxi. 23, 24.

2. To be where he is, is to be perfectly freed from all evil, sin, sorrow, pain, persecution, affliction, temptation, and every imperfection. Rev. xxi. 4.

3. To be raised to the highest perfection their natures are capable of; their mind filled with light, their hearts enlarged and filled with ardent love, to be universally holy, without spot; to join the general assembly in contemplating, admiring, praising, and adoring God for ever.

4. To live under the brightest displays of the divine perfections, and the freest communications of his love and goodness, never to be intercepted, nor abated, nor to end.

5. To be for ever safe under his, and his Father's hand. Their God lives for ever, their Saviour never dies; and because he lives, they shall live also.

III. The principal design of their being with him as it is here expressed, to behold his glory.

1. His glory as Emmanuel, God and man in one person; a short glimpse of which made Peter cry out, as if in heaven, Lord, &c. Mat. xvii. 4.

2. As the only begotten of the Father, which he had before the world was. John xvii. 5.

3. Which he has acquired by his mediatorial work, in the salvation of the countless myriads of the redeemed, the effects of the travail of his soul. Is. liii. 11.

4. Which shall be ascribed to him, by all the hosts above, both angels and men. Rev. vii. 9—12.

Application.

1. Let us examine whether we are given to Christ, according to the evidence in the context. Ver. 8—14.

2. Let us be watchful and diligent, that we may not fall short of the glory designed for us. Ver. 12.

3. Let the consideration of that glory reconcile us to our present sufferings. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

THE BELIEVER'S CONSOLATION IN DEATH.

My flesh and my heart faileth, &c.—Ps. lxxiii. 26.

It is appointed for man to die, there is no discharge in this war: happy for us will it be, if, in our last and dying moments, we can apply the language of the Psalmist to ourselves: if with him we can say, let who will share the world among them, God is my portion, and that not for a limited time, but to all eternity.

Let us consider,

I. What the Psalmist means by the flesh and heart failing.

By the flesh failing we are to understand death; this is the notion which is here given us of it. Those two dear companions, the soul and the body, must be parted. The body is like a house subject to decays, and by neglect or violence may be rendered unfit for the soul to inhabit, and so is left by it. The flesh, though now animated by a living soul, it will not always be so. *My flesh faileth*, and it may be said to do so,

1. Continually; we die daily; are gradually decaying and wearing away. Job xiv. 10.

2. Universally; the Psalmist here speaks of himself, but it is equally true of every one. Eccl. vi. 6.

3. With great variety; in some early; in others, in their bloom; with others, not till the shadows of the evening come upon them; in some gradually, with a gentle hand, in others suddenly, without any warning, or it may be, visible cause.

4. Most certainly, without a possibility of prevention; neither food nor physic will always avail. Eccl. viii. 8.

5. Swiftly; it is but a few days at longest that we are to live. Jam. iv. 14; Job xiv. 1, 2.

6. In death, the flesh fails irrecoverably, as to its being restored to its former state upon earth. Heb. ix. 27; Ps. xxxix. 13.

When the flesh is thus failing in a dying hour, the heart may be ready to fail too, to sink into a state of despondency, and this may be owing,

1. To severity of affliction. Job xvi. 12.

2. To the recollection of past sins, although forgiven, without eyeing the sacrifice of Christ.

3. To the temptations of Satan.

4. To the loss of our evidence, as to our acceptance with God.

5. To a suspension of the sensible presence of Christ.

II. The source of our dependance in such awful circumstances, God. God is the strength of my heart: this the Psalmist, and thousands more, have been able to witness to his glory; and the same support shall be afforded to all those who fear and love him. This may be inferred,

1. From his love to them. Ps. xi. 7.
2. From his ability. Isa. lix. 1.
3. From his infinite presence with them. 2 Chron. xvi. 9.
4. From his faithfulness to his kind promises made to them, and on which he has caused them to hope. Isa. xliii. 1—3; 2 Chron. xii. 10.
5. From their interest in him, their portion for ever. The Lord is my portion, &c. Lam. iii. 24.

What kind of a portion God is, no creature can fully describe. (Job xi. 7.) We may, however, mention some of the characters that belong to him as such.

1. God is a suitable portion, suited to man's spiritual nature. Ver. 25.
2. All-sufficient portion. Gen. xvii. 1; Eph. iii. 20.
3. Infinite portion: and this is the ground of his being all-sufficient; in him there is infinite mercy to pardon, infinite wisdom to counsel, infinite power to support, infinite grace to enrich, infinite glory to bestow.
4. He is an eternal portion. (Gen. xv. 1.) And on this ground it is, the children of God make their boast, Ps. xlviii. 14.

Improvement.

1. Let the consideration of our flesh failing daily, excite us to a daily preparation for eternity.
2. As God is the strength of our hearts, let us trust in him, in life and death, that he may be our portion for ever.

**THE CHARACTER AND FUTURE HAPPINESS OF
BELIEVERS.**

They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, &c.
Mal. iii. 17.

IN the preceding verse we have the character and good conversation of the people of God in an evil day. Then they that feared the Lord spake one to another; of this God's approbation is recorded. And the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him. The text is God's gracious promise concerning them: and they shall be mine, &c.

Consider,

1. The description here given us of the people of God, they are his jewels.

The persons referred to are the same that are mentioned in the foregoing verse, they that fear the Lord. The fear of God is often expressive of the whole of religion. They that fear God have not only the form of godliness, but the power also. (Jer. xxxii. 40.) They have honourable thoughts of God, flee from sin as displeasing to him, watch against the risings of corruptions within, and resist temptation without, make conscience of keeping his commandments, attend his ordinances. (Ps. lxxxix. 7.) Fear and look diligently, lest they should fail of the grace of God now, for his glory at last, and come short of heaven after they have stood fair for it. (Heb. iv. 1.) They fear and apply to Christ, through whom only they can be delivered from the wrath to come, and accepted of

God as to their persons and services. These are the persons whom God calls his jewels : and they may be thus styled,

1. As rare, and comparatively few. (Deut. vii. 7.) God's spiritual Israel are so. Luke xii. 32.

2. On account of their excellency. Ps. xvi. 3.

3. As standing high in his esteem : men prize their jewels. Jer. xxx. 10, 11 ; Isa. xliii. 4.

4. As he esteems himself honoured by them, and greatly delights in them. Men count jewels their honour as well as their treasure. He who knows their worth, and the purposes for which they are formed, expressly calls Israel, my glory. Isa. xli. 13.

And it is worthy of remark, the endearing manner in which he speaks of them is, my jewels.

1. As they have been made such by himself. Titus iii. 5.

2. As he is the owner and disposer of them.

3. As they are set apart for himself, to serve him on earth, and reign with him in heaven. Ps. iv. 3.

4. God calls them his, to tell us what they are to him, although their worth may be hid from others.

II. What is here said concerning them ; they shall be the Lord's in that day, when he shall make them up.

1. By separating them from those of an opposite character. Matt. xiii. 30 ; xxv. 32.

2. By collecting them altogether in one great body. (Matt. xxiv. 31 ; Rev. vii. 9.) And this he will do.

At that day,

1. The day of the saint's dissolution, when their souls enter into the joy of their Lord, to be with Christ. Phil. i. 23.

2. The day of the general resurrection. That is

the day on which, God will, in the most eminent manner, make up his jewels, by raising all their bodies, reuniting soul and body, and taking them to his kingdom and glory. And,

They shall be his at that day,

1. They were his before, seeing that he redeemed and saved them: but he shall at that day,

2. Publicly testify his knowledge and approbation of them—And thus put,

3. To shame and silence the hard censures of their malignant foes.—And,

4. Tend to the greater confusion of the prince of darkness.—And,

5. Such a declaration will challenge the praises of the redeemed, to their faithful Lord, who shall have thus perfected that which concerns them. Rev. i. 5, 6.

And this shall be done by the Lord of hosts, which may be considered as a ground of hope and comfort to those of whom he here speaks.

1. As his power is more than equal to that of all their enemies. Rom. viii. 31.

2. And if this title is referred to his people, it intimates the number of those he will own at last; they will be many. Heb. ii. 10; Rev. vii. 9.

Application.

1. What a glorious change has God wrought in those who are his jewels!

2. As there is a day coming when they shall be made up, let those who are his jewels often think of it, and love it, together with his appearing. Tit. ii. 13.

3. What a great loss to the world is the removal of these jewels by death; but let it be our comfort to reflect that, what earth loses in this way, heaven gains.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST.

But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

Heb. i. 12.

THESE words are a description of Christ, full of comfort to all that fly to him; as displaying the eternity of his person and office, being and perfections. Whatever changes are made every year in persons and families, Jesus Christ is unchanged still, as able and willing to save this year as the last, or any year or age that is gone before. Thou art the same, &c.

Consider,

I. What Christ is in himself.

1. As to his person, he is the eternal Son of God, who existed from everlasting. John i. 1.

2. As to his office. He is mediator between God and man, fitted for it by assuming our nature into a personal union with the divine, that as God and man in one person he might transact with both. Though he was not incarnate till the fulness of time, he was appointed early to the office of mediator, and consented to undertake it: and so he speaks of himself as set up, &c. Prov. viii. 23.

When man sinned and needed a mediator, he is promised as the seed of the woman; and in the season fixed, the Word is made flesh.

This is he that Jacob acknowledges as the angel that redeemed him from all evil; whom Job trusted in as his Redeemer; whose day Abraham rejoiced to see and was glad; who at length came from the Father, and having died, rose again, and went back to his glory, and now lives, &c. Heb. vii. 25.

II. What believers have found him to be unto them.

1. It was Christ who awakened them to a sense of their lost, miserable state. Eph. ii. 1.

2. Who received them upon their applying to him for mercy and salvation, and believing on him, he pardoned all their sins. Col. i. 14.

3. Who adopted them into his family, and gave them the earnest of their inheritance. Rom. viii. 16, 16.

4. Thus passing into the number of his children, he continues to bless them by subduing their corruptions by his Spirit, giving them grace sufficient against the powers of darkness, teaching and helping them to pray, and answering their prayers; admitting them to intimate communion with himself, and in a peculiar manner manifests himself to them, &c. &c.

5. At death, he receives their departing spirits, to be with him in glory, watches over their bodies in the grave, and will raise them at the great day, to join their happy spirits in glory; and, as a pledge of this, Enoch and Elijah are already with him.

III. As to all this, the text is applicable to Christ. Thou art the same, &c.

1. He is the same in himself, as to his person and offices.

2. As to his interest in his Father, and acceptance with him: the Beloved, in whom he is always well pleased. Matt. iii. 17.

3. And with regard to us, the same as to his ability and willingness to save. Heb. vii. 25.

4. The merit of his death is the same it ever was. Rev. v. 6.

5. And he is the same, to pardon, justify, sanctify, and glorify.

Application.

1. If he is the same, let every Christless sinner seek an interest in Christ with the same diligence that ever any did; such have the same necessity, and the same encouragement.

2. Despair under the gospel is most unreasonable; seeing Christ came to save sinners, assures us of his having saved the chief of sinners, and represents himself as after all, the same.

3. Let believers rejoice in Christ as unchangeable. On this account they should rejoice evermore; as well as pray without ceasing, and in every condition give thanks.

**THE LOVE OF GOD THE WAY TO ETERNAL
LIFE.**

Keep yourselves in the love of God, &c.—Jude 21.

As our blessed Redeemer is gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his followers, with a promise of returning again, it is natural to inquire, what they are to do in the mean time, how they are to conduct themselves during his absence, with a view to his return? we have the answer to this in the text, *Keep yourselves, &c.*

I. The object to which our attention is here directed, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.

Eternal life.

1. This implies deliverance from all sin. Rev. xxi. 5.

2. The resurrection of the body from the power of the grave. John v. 29.

3. Deliverance from the second death. Rev. xxi. 8; xx. 6.

4. The everlasting enjoyment of God in his kingdom of glory. Matt. xxv. 34.

And this is to be obtained through mercy, the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ manifested to us.

1. In convincing us of sin by his Spirit. John xvi. 8.

2. Forgiving our iniquities. Col. i. 14.

3. Inspiring our hearts with a hope of heaven. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

4. And sanctifying our nature, as a preparation for the kingdom of heaven. Tit. ii. 14; iii. 5.

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He purchased it for us, both grace and glory. 1 John v. 11, 12.

2. He prepares it for us. (John xiv. 2.) And us for heaven by his Holy Spirit making us meet, &c. Eph. i. 13.

3. And gives it to us. John xvii. 2; x. 28.

II. Our duty in relation thereto, we are to keep ourselves in the love of God, and be looking for this mercy, &c.

We are to keep ourselves in the love of God.

1. By loving him. Prov. viii. 17.

2. By keeping ourselves free from the love of this world. 1 John ii. 15, 17.

3. By keeping from sin. Ps. xcvi. 10.

4. By keeping his commandments. John xv. 10. *1 John 2:3*

5. By labouring after a growth in grace. 2 Peter iii. 18.

6. By maintaining the communion of saints. Mal. iii. 16, 17.

Looking for this mercy to eternal life, which implies.

1. That our thoughts are frequently employed about it.

2. That our faith in reference to it, is kept lively in exercise. Heb. xi. 1.

3. That our hearts are continually set upon it. Matt. vi. 24.

4. That we patiently wait till we are called hence to the enjoyment of it. (Heb. vi. 12.) The Christian has need of patience, and he has ground for it too. James v. 7.

5. That we are seriously watchful and diligent in preparing for it. Matt. xxiv. 44.

Application.

1. Is it mercy that bestows eternal life? how unreasonable then is the sin of despair.

2. Is it the mercy of Christ? how destructive the folly of those who seek it any where else. Acts iv. 19.

3. What obligations are we under to Jesus Christ, for procuring eternal life for us. Ps. ciii. 1—3.

4. How deservedly precious is Christ to them that believe. 1 Peter ii. 7.

THE HAPPINESS OF DYING IN THE LORD.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead, &c.—Rev. xiv. 13.

THESE words are a voice from heaven, concerning the future state of those that die in Christ; and surely none are better qualified to comfort those who are left behind, than one of the heavenly company.

Our blessed Lord tells his disciples, when sinking into despondency at the idea of his leaving them, "If

ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my Father" (John xiv. 28.); so when the believer dies, he goes to be with him : and, that we may not sorrow as those who have no hope, the text tells us, that they are not lost by ceasing to live in this world, but are advanced to an infinitely better life than this : "Blessed are the dead," &c.

Consider,

I. What it is to die in the Lord, and who may be said to do so.

This may be said of the martyrs who die for the Lord, and seal the truth of their profession with their blood. It is applicable also to all real Christians, who are united to Christ, and die the members of his mystical body : these die in the Lord. And, in order to this,

Something is previously necessary.

1. That they be quickened and made alive by the Lord. John v. 20, 21 ; Eph. ii. 1.

2. That they be pardoned, justified, and sanctified. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

3. That they walk after him. Heb. xii. 2 ; 1 Peter ii. 21.

4. That they live to him, as they receive all from him. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15 ; Phil. i. 21.

Something is implied.

1. That we die in submission to his will, when, where, and how he pleases. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

2. In dependance upon him for life and immortality.

3. A sincere desire to be with him. Phil. i. 23.

II. Wherein their blessedness consists : and the text tells us, that,

"They rest from their labours."

1. Arising from the evils to which they were subject in this world : disease, pain; want, &c. " Many are the afflictions," &c. (Ps. xxxiv. 19.) All shall be left behind at death. Rev. xxi. 4.

2. From Satan's temptations. After death they shall be placed beyond the reach of his fiery darts. (2 Cor. iv. 4.) These they shall have left in the field of battle, and be " where the weary are at rest." 1 Peter v. 8; Job iii. 17.

3. From the persecution of the ungodly. John xv. 20.

4. From the remains of the carnal mind, wanderings in duty, and the imperfections of the best of our religious services.

" Their works follow them."

All the works they have done for God and his Christ, to advance his glory, prepare themselves for his kingdom, and serve his interest, and to help on others to it. These works shall follow after, so as to enter with them, and that in the most endearing manner.

1. In God's faithful remembrance of them all, Heb. vi. 10; Mal. iii. 16.

2. In the recompense of reward, which God will bestow. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

III. Why this message is so solemnly proclaimed by " a voice from heaven."

1. To let an unthinking world know what becomes of the friends of Christ when they die.

2. To assure believers that death is no hinderance to their happiness; but the certain, though awful, way to it.

3. To leave it on record, to the end of time, for the assurance of every Christian, that their rest is not here, and to excite them to look after one remaining.

Application.

1. Are the dead, who die in the Lord, blessed? how miserable are they who die out of him: and if the former are blessed immediately, henceforth from the time they die, so the latter must be wretched immediately upon their dying.

2. How much better to a believer is the day of his death, than the day of his birth; seeing he is born to labour, but dies to rest!

THE ADVANTAGE OF EARLY PIETY.

Who also were in Christ before me.—Rom. xvi. 7.

THESE are the words of St. Paul, and they discover his humble and amiable spirit. He speaks of himself as one born out of due time (1 Cor. xv. 8.), seeing that Christ was seen of him so late; and he reckons it to the greater honour and advantage of others who were sooner converted to him: that were believers in Christ while he was a persecutor; in a state of grace, while he was in a state of nature; pardoned in the blood of Jesus, and following him in faith and holiness to heaven, whilst he was a stranger, and an enemy to God. “Happy they,” as if he said, “who were sooner rescued and recovered, washed and sanctified, &c. before I was. Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.”

Consider,

1. What we are to understand by being in Christ.

To be in Christ, is,

1. To have a special, or particular interest in his death, so as to enjoy the effects of it; pardon, justification, sanctification, &c. and this in contradistinction to that general interest which all men have therein. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

2. To be united to him in faith and affection, so as to dwell in him, and he in us. 1 Cor. vi. 17; John vi. 56.

II. The blessedness of being in Christ; and this may be seen,

In the union itself.

1. As it is intimate and endearing. (Rom. vi. 5; Eph. i. 23; John xiv. 20; 1 John iv. 13.) "He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15.); in all our afflictions he was afflicted (Col. i. 24.); their sufferings and enemies are his. Acts ix. 4.

2. As it is most honourable. They are reckoned the offscouring of all things (1 Cor. iv. 13.); yet they are allied to the Lord of glory. 1 Cor. ii. 8; Isa. xliii. 4.

3. As it is enriching. It lets into a participation of Christ: "His riches are unsearchable." (Eph. iii. 8; 1 Cor. ii. 9; John i. 16; Eph. i. 3.) Christ is heir of all things (Heb. i. 2.); and believers are joint heirs with him. Rom. viii. 17.

4. As it is most comfortable. Abundant peace and support must be the consequence: this union alleviates every affliction, and sweetens every mercy, &c.

5. As it is immediate. They are members of his body, and all in him. There is but one corner-stone laid in Zion: and believers are spiritual stones; a spiritual house (1 Peter ii. 5. 6.); a habitation of God. Eph. ii. 22.

This blessedness will farther appear, if we consider the blessings believers receive in consequence of this union.

1. They have their sins pardoned. Col. i. 14; Ps. xxxii. 1.

2. They are delivered from all condemnation. Rom. viii. 1.

3. From the reigning power of sin. Rom. viii. 2; John viii. 36.

4. From the tyranny of Satan. Col. i. 12, 13.

5. They enjoy God's favour. Rom. v. 1.

6. They are his children. John i. 12; Eph. ii. 19.

7. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Rom. viii. 17.

8. They have free access to his throne. Hab. iv. 16; John xiv. 13, 14.

9. God and his Christ dwell with such. John xiv. 23.

10. And they have the promise of a glorious resurrection to life eternal (Rom. viii. 11; Phil. iii. 21.); and to be for ever with the Lord. 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.

III. The advantage of being in Christ early. And, as it respects young persons, there are various inducements to hasten their choice of Christ, that they may be one with him.

1. It will preserve them from sin, to which youth is prone (Eccl. xi. 10.); and prevent painful reflections for past follies. Job xiii. 26.

2. They will be prevented from being destructive examples to others.

3. They will thereby be fitted for eminent services for God, and their generation. Philem. 11.

4. Such are particularly dear to God. (Jer. ii. 2; Hosea xi. 3; xiv. 3.) See what tenderness Christ ma-

nifests to his lambs. (Isa. xl. 11.) John, the youngest of his disciples, leaned upon his breast, and is called, "the disciple whom he loved." John xxi. 20.

5. Hereupon their great work upon earth will be over, being early prepared for a blessed eternity; and death, which to others is the king of terrors, will be to such a blessing. 1 Cor. iii. 22.

6. And if they are spared longer, by being early in Christ, they will have an opportunity of making greater proficiency in grace, and so enlarge their capacity for greater glory: and so an entrance shall be administered abundantly, &c. 2 Peter i. 11.

Application.

1. If it is the happiness of some to be in Christ before others, how miserable must it be to be in a Christless state (Eph. ii. 12.); without Christ, without hope.

2. How dangerous must it be to rest in a mere profession of religion. Matt. vii. 21.

3. How unreasonable is the backwardness of sinners to come to Christ.

4. And how thankful should those be, who are sensible of their interest in Christ. Ps. ciii. 1, 2.

THE ABUNDANCE OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.—Luke xiv. 22.

THESE words are part of a parable, in which much of the mystery of the gospel is contained; and the manifest design of it is, to shew that, however suc-

cessful the gospel of Christ has been in time past, sinners may yet come, and be received by Christ, and be for ever saved. "Wisdom hath built her house," &c. (Prov. ix. 1.); and, amongst the highly favoured guests, who are partaking of this joyful feast, "yet there is room."

Consider,

I. Where there is room.

1. In the mercy of God. It is over all his works, and from everlasting. (Ps. cxlv. 9.) It belongeth unto God. Ps. ciii. 17; Exod. xx. 6; Isa. xxx. 18; Ps. cxlvii. 11.

2. In the merits of Christ. He is an all-sufficient Saviour. (Heb. vii. 24, 25; 1 John i. 7.) The merit of his death is unbounded, as it respects man. 1 John ii. 2.

3. As to the power and efficacy of the Spirit to renew and change the hardest heart. Such a change is necessary, we have destroyed ourselves; and if ever we are recovered, it must be by help from heaven. (Hos. xiii. 9.) The conversion of a sinner is the Spirit's work (Titus iii. 5, 6.); which the Father hath promised (Luke. xxiv. 49.); engaged to pour out (Zech. xii. 10.); Christ died to open a way for it. Gal. iii. 13, 14.

4. In the household of faith. More members may be added to Christ's mystical body; in order to this the gospel is preached; the ministers of Christ labour, encouraged by the extensive request of their Master, Christ, a little before his death. (John xvii. 20.) There is yet plentiful provision in our Father's house. (Hosea xiv. 5.) Those who come into the vineyard at the third, sixth, or ninth hour, do not hinder others from being invited and received at the eleventh (Rev. ii. 3.);

and we are still to pray that his kingdom may come, which is capable of increase, both as to number and perfection.

5. In the mansions of glory. They are many (John xiv. 2, 3.); and all who overcome here, shall be made pillars there. (Rev. iii. 12.) The city is prepared for them (Heb. xi. 16.); for this Jesus died (Heb. ii. 10.); for this he prays. (John xvii. 24.) He has declared so much (John xii. 26.); and when he shall appear, they also shall appear with him, &c. Col. iii. 4.

II. For whom is their room.

In general, there is room for all sorts and conditions of men; those of one kingdom and country as well as another. The gospel is sent into all the world, and to be preached to every human creature capable of hearing. Mark xvi. 15.

But more particularly,

1. There is room for the meanest and most despicable in the world. God is no respecter of persons. (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) The things of the kingdom are revealed to babes. (Eph. vi. 9.) Not many wise or noble are called (1 Cor. i. 26—29.); the poor are chosen. (James ii. 5.) Lazarus in Abraham's bosom was once a beggar. (Luke xv. 20.) Jesus himself was poor while on earth. Matt. viii. 20.

2. The rich men are under no necessity of perishing, there is room for them. Their situation is indeed critical (Matt. xix. 24.); their salvation very difficult (Mark x. 25; Luke xviii. 23.); they must be delivered from trusting in riches: and with God this is possible. Matt. xix. 26.

3. The afflicted must not be forgotten, there is room for them. The pains of the body are no proof that God will not have mercy on the soul. Some of

the most eminent saints have been in the furnace of affliction, as David, Hezekiah, Job: God has caused many to pass under the rod, that he might bring them into the bond of the covenant. Ezek. xx. 37.

4. There is yet room for such as have long stood out, neglecting, and making light of the invitations of the gospel. (2 Cor. vi. 2.) The compassionate Redeemer is still saying, "Behold, &c. Rev. iii. 20.

5. There is yet room for such as have backslidden; having fallen into sin, after the most promising beginnings. Jer. iii. 22.

Lastly, to add no more: There is yet room for the chief of sinners. Pardon and peace were first proclaimed to those who crucified our God (Luke xxiv. 47; see 1 Tim. i. 15.); and all that labour, and are heavy laden, are promised rest. Matt. xi. 28.

Application.

1. How justly may the gospel be called a joyful sound.

2. What encouragement for gospel-ministers still to preach this gospel: "Yet there is room."

3. When Satan suggests, "it is too late to repent, and be saved;" he may be silenced by the text, "Yet there is room."

4. Let none take encouragement from the text, to make light of the invitations of the gospel, or put off their repentance. For although there is room in the kingdom of grace and glory, yet we should remember there is room in the grave, and in hell too: and how many have sunk into both, while neglecting their salvation.

5. This may be a source of consolation to pious souls, respecting their unconverted friends and relatives. They may yet be saved, for "yet there is room."

6. Being called into the kingdom of grace, and finding there is room, let this confirm your faith and hope, as to your reception to glory.

CHRIST AS THE BELIEVER'S LIVING REDEEMER.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth.—Job xix. 25.

THESE are the words of holy Job, to which, by the most solemn introduction, he invites a special regard. He here utters what he thought would bear him out in wishing so earnestly as he does: "Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock, for ever?" Upon which the text comes in, as the reason of all, "For I know," &c. These words are an abundant source of consolation to afflicted Christians; though their outward comforts drop off like leaves in autumn, and troubles roll in as the waves of the sea, breaking one on the neck of another, such have enough to support their souls, and keep their hope from dying, while they can look up and say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

In speaking from these words, I shall shew,

I. How the title of Redeemer belongs to Christ.

The word here rendered Redeemer, signifies kinsman; and, among the Jews, it was customary for such to redeem the person, or possession, of a brother, when sold or detained, and set them free. Ruth iii. 9—13; iv. 1—3.

Now in allusion to this, Christ is fitly called our Redeemer, upon a threefold account.

1. In regard to the miserable state of bondage in

which he finds us. By transgression we have fallen from God, forfeited our inheritance to his justice ; our persons, as guilty malefactors, are liable to his flaming wrath, without any hope of heaven, bound over to an everlasting hell, and no power to escape, subject to the tyranny of Satan. (Eph. ii. 2.) Such is our condition by nature ; and hence the necessity of redemption.

2. Such is the grace of Jesus Christ, that he stoops into a near relation to us ; becomes by incarnation, our kinsman after the flesh, that he might have right to redeem. If ever we are recovered, the same nature that sinned must suffer. Heb. ii. 14.

3. Being entered into the relation, he performs the part of a kinsman ; redeeming us from our state of bondage and misery ; and this two ways.

1. By price. He paid the price of our redemption, which was the greatest that was ever paid, his blood. (1 Pet. i. 18.) And this was absolutely necessary (Heb. ix. 22.) ; and his blood being shed, we have redemption through his blood, &c. Col. i. 14.

2. To complete our recovery, and fulfil his office, he also rescues us, by power, from the tyranny of Satan ; compelling that potent, malicious enemy, to let his captives go (Heb. ii. 14 ; Col. ii. 15.) ; and being now ascended, he pursues the victory, by opening sinners' eyes (Acts xxvi. 18.) ; binds Satan, and takes his goods. Matt. xii. 29.

Thus by price, and by power, as a lamb, and as a lion, appeasing God, and conquering Satan, purchasing heaven, and delivering from hell, is the great Emmanuel become our Redeemer. Thanks be to God, that help is laid upon one so mighty to save.

II. Believers will, and ought to apply to Christ, the living Redeemer, for relief and comfort in all their

troubles. They should always be sensible of their necessity and obligations to do so, inasmuch,

1. As fallen creatures, there is no coming unto the Father but through a Mediator; or, in Job's language, "a day's-man." Job. ix. 33.

2. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man; such a Redeemer as there is no other. We must, therefore, look to him in trouble, as he is Head over all things to his church. Eph. i. 22, 23.

3. He is provided and exalted of God to this very end, that the weary and heavy laden, under whatever burden, might apply to him for rest; and hereby "honour the Son as they honour the Father." And those who thus apply to him, shall find his promise sure. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

4. To them that believe he is precious, from the experience they have had of his power and grace. (1 Pet. ii. 7.) When troubled, in him they have found peace. John xvi. 33.

III. It is a source of consolation to believers, in looking to Christ as the Redeemer, to know that he liveth, and that he is theirs.

This may be said of him as God, and as Emmanuel, God-man. He liveth,

1. As God. He is from everlasting to everlasting. The Word was God, as well as with him (John i. 1.); and having undertaken our recovery, he speaks of himself as set up from everlasting. (Prov. viii. 23.) Job says, "My Redeemer liveth," intimating his eternal existence, without any distinction of time, past or to come. He believed him as the Deity, and says of him, "In my flesh shall I see God." As to his divinity, he was before Abraham. John viii. 58.

2. As Emmanuel, God with us, it may be said,

our Redeemer liveth. (Rev. i. 18.) And how much this contributes to a believer's comfort, will appear from the following considerations.

1. As it shews the value and efficacy of his death and sacrifice ; that what he did and suffered is well-pleasing to God, and available for the recovery of man. Rom. iv. 25.

2. His living again confirms the truth of his doctrines and promises, as to what he was, and what he would bestow upon his followers, in this life and in another. Though he was put to death as a man, and vile malefactor, he is now declared to be the Son of God, &c. Rom. i. 4, also v. 10.

3. It is no small addition to a Christian's comfort, that Christ lives in heaven. He has regained the celestial paradise that we had lost. Heb. i. 3.

He liveth, and is "ascended to his Father and our Father," &c. (John xx. 17.) And by abiding with him, clearly shews that his satisfaction for sinners is perfect and everlasting ; and so his interest above can never fail. John xvi. 8. 10.

He liveth, and is preparing mansions in the invisible glory, whither, as forerunner, he is for us entered. John xiv. 2, 3 ; Heb. vi. 20.

He liveth, and appeareth in the presence of God for us, as our powerful Mediator and Advocate with the Father. (Heb. ix. 24 ; 1 John ii. 1.) "The Father heareth him always, and is ready to supply all our wants, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Phil. iv. 19.

He liveth, as the fountain and principle of life to us, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii. 2.) ; and, "because he lives, we shall live also." John xiv. 19.

He is theirs.

This is a source of "strong consolation to the heirs of promise, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them;" who can say, "my beloved, my Saviour, my Redeemer, is mine." Cant. ii. 16.

He is theirs, whose riches are unsearchable (Eph. iii. 8.); "in whom all fulness dwells (Col. i. 19.); whose power saves to the uttermost (Heb. vii. 25.); whose person is altogether lovely (Cant. v. 16.); whose love is stronger than death (Cant. viii. 6.); it passeth knowledge." Eph. iii. 19.

He is theirs, by the call and appointment of the Father; "the beloved in whom they are chosen and accepted." Eph. i. 6.

He is theirs, by voluntary undertaking their recovery; he gave himself for his church (Eph. v. 25); laid down his life for the sheep. John x. 11.

He is theirs, by mutual consent and intimate union; introduced by the Spirit on his part, and faith on theirs. Hosea iii. 3.

He is their head and husband, physician and friend; their teacher, Saviour, and Lord, their sacrifice, surety, ransom, advocate; every thing that their souls can need.

He is theirs, and his word and Spirit, promises and providences, blessings temporal, spiritual, and everlasting, are theirs too; all things are theirs, who have Christ for theirs. 1 Cor. iii. 22.

III. How believers may draw suitable support from hence, under the trials with which they may be severely exercised.

1. I begin with what they feel on account of the church when in low circumstances; when it goes ill

with Zion, and Babylon triumphs. But the Redeemer liveth, who purchased the church with his blood (Acts xv. 28.); against which the gates shall not prevail (Matt. xvi. 18.); and who will make his enemies his footstool. (Ps. cx. 1.) He liveth, and hath the turning of all the great wheels of Providence, and has the hearts of the greatest in his hands; has in time past watched over his church, and delivered Zion in her greatest straits. Ps. xxv. 22.

2. Public calamities, wars, storms, and tempests, pestilential diseases, and desolating judgments; this is Christ's voice to all his, "Be not terrified." (Luke xxi. 9.) He liveth, who is Lord of hosts, the only potentate (1 Tim. vi. 15.); whom winds and seas obey (Matt. viii. 27.); without whom nothing can befall me; who can set a mark on my habitation, as well as my soul, that the destroying angel shall pass over; or, if I am permitted to fall, he liveth, from whose love nothing can separate; and when, and however I go, it will be to him.

3. In poverty and want. Though stripped, like Job, or begging, like Lazarus, he liveth, whose eye sees and pities me; whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof (Ps. xxiv. 1.); who fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes (John vi.); who multiplied the widow's oil and meal. 1 Kings xvii. 14—16.

4. As to bodily afflictions and bereaving dispensations of Providence: he liveth, "who was a man of sorrows, &c. (Isa. liii. 3.); and who has promised, that all things shall work together for good, to them that love him." Rom. viii. 28.

5. As to the temptations of Satan: he liveth, who is exalted above principalities and powers (Eph. i. 21.); who was in all points tempted like us (Heb. iv.

15.); who prays for us, as well as Peter (Luke xxii. 32.); who has promised sufficient grace (2 Cor. xii. 9.); and who hath promised final victory. Rom. xvi. 20.

6. As to remaining corruption : he liveth, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. 1 John i. 7.

7. When the believer is dying, it will comfort him to know that his Redeemer liveth, who hath the keys of death and the invisible world : who will open the passage at the fittest time, and accompany him in his passage to his throne. Ps. xxiii. 4.

Improvement.

1. How much does it concern every one to have an interest in this living Redeemer. When we are afflicted, tried, and dying, what can equal our being able to say, " I know that my Redeemer liveth ? "

2. Let those, who can say so, endeavour to follow his steps (Phil. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 6.); and then such will, at last, prove the truth of that promise. John xii. 26.

THE BELIEVER'S CHOICE AND PREFERENCE OF CHRIST.

Whom have I in heaven but thee, &c.—Ps. lxxiii. 25.

THESE are the words of a saint, upon a serious survey of both worlds, fixing on God as his portion, and chief good : they express the peculiar feelings of such a one when he first comes to God, and afterward renews his covenant with him. The Lord's portion is his people (Deut. xxxii. 9.); and he also is theirs.

Their choice of him is hearty and particular. "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." And the text is expressive of the satisfaction they have in him, and it is such as they can find in none else: "Whom have I," &c.

Consider,

I. How God is to be considered, when the Christian speaks thus of him.

1. Not absolutely, or as, in himself, clothed with majesty, armed with justice; of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; inclined to punish it; and, by almighty, irresistible power, able in the most terrible manner, to do so. Thus considered, he is a consuming fire: and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. (Heb. x. 31. see also Ps. cxliii. 2.) The consideration of an absolute God, is what even his own children cannot bear. But,

2. As God in Christ, having given his Son for us. (John iii. 16.) "Having delivered him up for us all." (Rom. viii. 32.) In Christ he is full of compassion to lost sinners: "Fury is not in him. He is the Father of mercies, the God of all grace and comfort" (2 Cor. i. 3.); his name and nature is love. (1 John iv. 8.) And thus, under the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, the believer says with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?"

II. What the Christian may have in view, in earth or heaven, which is desirable, but to which he prefers his God.

To begin with the world in which we live: "There is none on earth that I desire besides thee."

1. Deliverance from present evils, as sickness, pains, losses, disappointments, &c. A freedom from

these is desirable ; but this would not compensate for the loss of the divine presence and favour.

2. The enjoyment of temporal goods ; riches, honours, friends, and all necessary accommodations for pleasure and delight. These are what the world admire and pursue ; but the Christian prefers his God to them all. Ps. iv. 6.

3. The ordinances and means of grace. How earnestly does David desire these ? What delight has he in them. (Ps. lxxxiv. 1—4.) How vehemently does his soul desire to “ dwell in the house of the Lord.” But for what ? only to sit under his ordinances ? No ; but “ to behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps. xxvii. 4.) ; for this he declares. (Ps. xliii. 1, 2, and again in Ps. lxiii. 1, 2.) No freedom from evil, enjoyment of temporal good, external ordinances, can satisfy the pious mind, without the sensible enjoyment of the presence of God ; “ There is none on earth,” &c.

Let us look higher, to heaven. Here are many things desirable, but still these will not do in the place of God.

1. The glory of the place is transcendent. Rev. xxi. 10—27.

2. The company is desirable ; angels and glorified saints. Rev. vii. 9—11.

3. Their employment is glorious. Rev. vii. 10—12.

4. The fulness of joy lies in the presence of God, and in being with Christ. This is what the Christian most ardently desires above all other things in heaven, or upon earth. Ps. xvii. 15.

III. Whence is it that nothing short of God can satisfy the believer ?

1. That which satisfies, or makes us happy, must

be suitable to our natures. This cannot be said of any created good. Our souls are spiritual, and their desires boundless; and who but he, whose perfections are infinite, can suit or satisfy these? This is the encouragement God gives Abraham. *i. e.* his all-sufficiency, Gen. xvii. 1.

2. That which satisfies must be firm, and unchangeable; but of whom, or what, can this be said, but of God only. (Ps. cii. 25—27.) “With him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.”

3. The soul is immortal, and the good that satisfies it must be everlasting. At death we leave our present state, and exchange it for an eternal state; but God is from everlasting to everlasting, and so the only proper portion of his people for both worlds. None in heaven, or upon earth, can be to them in the stead of God.

IV. The Christian renouncing all other good, what he may have in view, when he says, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?”

1. Communion with God here, having access to him through his Son, by the help of his Spirit: sending his desires after him, and receiving supplies of light, life, love, &c. 1 John i. 3.

2. The future, full enjoyment of God above, which will be infinitely greater than any thing of God which the Christian can enjoy here (1 John iii. 2.); and this he is continually aspiring to.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? which, as to its import, includes such things as these:

1. Whom have I but thee, that I should choose and prefer before all the world?

2. Whom have I in heaven or on earth but thee, that I should so much delight in, be pleased with, and of

whom my meditation should be so sweet. Ps. xvi. 5—7.

3. Whom have I in either world but thee, that I should unfeignedly resign to, and consent to be governed by? Ps. lxxiii. 23.

* 4. Whom have I in heaven, or earth, that I should love but thee, in comparison of thee, or any otherwise than in thee, and for thee?

5. Whom have I in heaven but thee, to whom I should pray, direct my homage and worship to?

6. Whom have I in heaven or earth but thee, to trust and hope in? Thy name is the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting kindness and strength.

Lastly, Whom have I in heaven but thee, that I must long to be with?

To be able to speak this language feelingly, clearly shews;

1. The change of soul that such have experienced in being born of God. It is the effect of a new nature.

2. The experience such have had of the insufficiency of all created good, to satisfy without God. Ps. cxix. 96; Eccl. xi. 8.

3. The comfort and satisfaction the holy soul has found in God, more than all the world besides, determines to this. Ps. lxiii. 2.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE TO DWELL IN GOD'S HOUSE.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, &c.

Ps. xxvii. 4.

THESE words are expressive of the temper of a gracious soul, one born from heaven, and travelling thither.

In speaking from the text, we may consider,

I. What is meant by the house of God, in which the Christian desires to dwell?

1. The house of God sometimes means any place where the presence of God is manifested. Gen. xxviii. 16, 17.

2. Any house or building where God is worshipped in; the tabernacle first, and afterward the temple, was frequently called the house of God. Ps. xlii. 4; cxxii. 1.

3. Under the gospel dispensation, the house of God, and a church, or worshipping assembly of his people, are all one. (1 Peter ii. 5.) There Christ has promised to be. Matt. xviii. 20.

4. The state of glory in heaven. It is sometimes represented as a country, a better country (Heb. xi. 14. 16.); a kingdom (James ii. 5.); a city (Heb. xi. 16.); and our Lord speaks of it under the notion of a house. (John xiv. 2.) It is a country, for its largeness and extent, and for its pleasure; it is a paradise (Luke xxiii. 43.); a kingdom for its grandeur, a city for its order, and a house for the neatness and familiarity allowed to the blessed inhabitants. It is a house of God, in which all his people live, as children in the

same family, members of the same society, and have a common dependance on the same Father, shewing the greatest love to him, and to each other. The apostle speaks of heaven in this view. (2 Cor. v. 1.) The firmament, so thick set and adorned with stars, is but the pavement of the outer court of this house of God; and the glory of this intimates, that it is inconceivably bright and beautiful within. This is what the Psalmist ultimately aimed at; he not only wished to enjoy the means of grace here, but the state of glory above; and to this he may be supposed to refer in psalm xvii. 15.

II. Consider the nature of the Christian's desire, in relation to the house of God, together with the occasion of it.

1. It is real, not pretended only, or professed before men: they can appeal to God for the truth of it.

2. Determinate and fixed. He speaks as having all the powers of the soul united, and running into it: it was the one thing that he desired, as if all other things were of little value in his estimation. See the language of the Psalmist, which nothing but the warmest feeling could help him to. Ps. xliii. 1, 2; lxiii. 1; lxxxiv. 2.

3. Constant and abiding; not transient, and but for a little while; but it still lives in the soul in which it is kindled, and, as a proof of it, he is resolved still to seek after it, to dwell in the house of the Lord.

4. It is influential upon practice. The soul that desires to dwell in the house of the Lord, will express it in prayer to him, and follow it with his own endeavour; he will seek after it, and think no labour too much to attain to it.

This desire is occasioned,

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1. By the heavenly principle with which he is blessed; what comes from God, leads to him.

2. The difference there is between his state below, and that above, as to place; this earth is but the viler part of creation, how much inferior to heaven! As to inhabitants, here are a mixture of all sorts; but above, all will be alike, and all like God. As to circumstances without, here they are subject to the rage of the world, the temptations of Satan, and a thousand snares; but above, the one shall be done away, and the other complete. As to their work, here they have constant need to pray and cry for what they want, to watch against what they fear, lament over what they feel; but above, all ground of complaint shall be removed, and prayer turned into everlasting praise.

3. The foretastes they sometimes have of what is to be enjoyed above; this leads them earnestly to desire the fulness.

III. The end at which he aims, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

The beauty of the Lord; but none can fully understand this, till admitted within the veil. (1 Cor. ii. 9.) In the house above, the face of God shall be unveiled, his beauty discovered, and the faculties of his people strengthened to bear it. The discovery of his perfections begun here, will be perfected above. This beauty the Christian desires,

1. As it is transforming. 2 Cor. iii. 18; 1 John iii. 2.

2. As most pleasing, to behold a reconciled face, to see the tokens of his love, to look into the soul and behold his likeness, to be admitted to communion with him, and that for ever.

And to inquire in his temple.

1. Into the mysteries of Providence.
2. Into the mysteries of redemption, concerning all of which they shall receive the most ample satisfaction. John xiii. 7; 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Improvement.

1. How astonishing is it, that God should have a temple with men!
2. How kind was the undertaking of Christ, to open a way to this!
3. How much to be lamented is it, that so few should desire to dwell in his house!
4. How great is the change in those who desire this above all other things!
5. How seriously should we examine how it is with us!

THE ADVANTAGE OF HOPING AND WAITING FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD.

It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.—Lam. iii. 26.

THE goodness of God is a powerful argument to engage his people to seek him, and wait for him. So it is, as it is infinite; as through his Son, it is open and ready to be communicated to those who otherwise could have no hope; as it is what his people have experienced, and given their testimony to. The goodness of God under such views, may well be his people's support, in seeking to him, waiting for him, as he never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. None of the servants of God shall be losers by him, but every one of them shall be led to own at

last that it is good to hope, and quietly wait for his salvation.

Consider,

I. What is included in the salvation here spoken of. In general it includes the whole of that blessedness that Christ hath purchased, and which God for his sake hath promised. It is,

1. A salvation from every kind and degree of evil—sin, temptations, the troubles of this world, and future everlasting miseries. Rev. xxi. 3, 4.

2. The being put into the possession of all good, for which it is called a salvation, with eternal glory. (2 Tim. ii. 10.) An inheritance incorruptible, &c. (1 Peter i. 4, 5.) Where every desire shall be filled up, every prayer answered, and all changed into the most exalted, everlasting praise and thanksgiving.

II. Why is it called the salvation of the Lord?

1. It is a salvation worthy of him. Heb. xi. 16.

2. It is designed, prepared, and promised by him. Rev. ii. 10.

3. It is a salvation that will consist in the enjoyment of him. It may well be said, it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but what we are waiting for, is the salvation of God.

III. What is implied in hoping and patiently waiting for it?

1. Having the heart fixed by faith on the salvation of God as real, though out of sight. (Heb. xi. 1.) By this the people of God wait for his salvation, not as a mere probability, but as the greatest certainty.

2. A full persuasion that the salvation of God will come at last, though for a time deferred. Though I am in one world, and the happiness I expect in another; hope enters into that within the veil; and

so proves an anchor to the soul, enabling the heirs of the kingdom to hold fast till they enter heaven.

3. Expecting the salvation of God in his time; depending upon his wisdom to choose the fittest season, and his faithfulness to remember us when that season comes.

4. Serious care to be found ready, whenever called to enter upon the salvation of God, which we have been waiting for.

IV. In what respects it may be said to be good, thus to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of God.

1. It is good, as it redounds to God's glory; as it is a testimony of his power and grace.

2. As it may encourage others to look, and wait for this salvation.

3. As it will be comfortable to ourselves, disposing us to meet the will of God in a becoming manner; when our heavenly Father shall call, saying, "Come up hither," to be ready to step forth and answer, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord—Blessed is that servant, who, when his Lord cometh, shall be found so doing."

CHRIST'S DEEP HUMILIATION IN THE STATE OF THE DEAD.

And when Joseph had taken the body, &c.
Matt. xxvii. 59, 60.

IN the preceding account, we behold the most astonishing event that ever engaged the attention of mankind, the crucifixion of the Son of God. He is

shamefully betrayed by one of his own disciples, denied by another, and forsaken of all, arraigned at the bar of Pilate, condemned, though innocent, and put to death. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, and one of our Lord's disciples, had courage sufficient to beg the dead body of our Lord for burial, of Pilate who had condemned him; a requisition which it appears he readily granted. And when Joseph had taken the body, &c.

Consider,

I. The deep humiliation of the Lord Jesus, from the time of his death to his resurrection; he continued in the state of the dead for a time, which was the lowest step of his humiliation, and the deepest abasement of the Son of God. For,

1. Death continued its power and dominion over him all that time. (Rom. vi. 9.) He was kept fast bound as with cords in this state of captivity, bondage, and imprisonment. Acts ii. 24.

2. While in this state, he was cut off, as all the dead are, from the comforts of this life, and from all capacity of performing those holy duties and services to God and man, which is the privilege of living saints beyond the dead.

Although the souls of departed saints are employed in the praises of God, and other services in heaven, yet the whole man is not thus employed as when they were in this world; and hence, on this account, good men have sometimes pleaded with God to be spared from death for a time, as David, Hezekiah, and others. Isa. xxxviii. 19.

3. Men took occasion therefrom to give him over as lost, as completely vanquished by death, beyond all hope of deliverance. His enemies, who said of him

when alive, he saved others, "himself he cannot save;" would say much more of him, while he continued in the state of the dead. (verses 42, 43.) Yea, the faith of his disciples was almost extinguished by this circumstance. Luke xxiv. 20, 21.

4. His soul entered into heaven, as the soul of a good man; so that, when he entered paradise, when he died, it was only with one half of his humanity (Luke xxiii. 43.); and in that separate state, he waited for the reunion of his soul with his body, thereby acknowledging the dominion of death over him.

5. His body was laid in the grave: that body which was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, inhabited by the Godhead, and continued personally united to the divine nature in the person of the eternal Son, was laid in the dark and silent grave. He was buried at the expense of others, buried privately, in a hurry, without any state of pomp, buried in Joseph's new tomb: he had not where to lay his head while living, nor a tomb of his own to lay his body in when dead.

6. His body was in the power of his enemies all the while. His body was pierced by the spear of a Roman soldier: it could not be buried, till leave was granted by a pagan judge. Deep humiliation! that the remains of God, in the nature of man, should be asked for, in order to be buried! His tomb, with his body, was committed, by the Roman governor, to the custody of the chief priests until the third day; they sealed the stone at the door, and placed a guard of Roman soldiers to watch it.

II. Why our Lord continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of it, for a time.

1. That the types and prophecies relative thereto, might have their accomplishment. Ps. xxii. 15 ; Isa. liii. 9 ; Matt. xii. 40.

2. To ascertain the reality of his death and resurrection from the dead. His enemies neither could, nor can pretend, that he was not really dead, and that his resurrection was but a fiction : Pilate was assured of his death, before he gave liberty for his body to be buried. The spear pierced him to the heart, which would have been certain present death, if he had not been dead before. And his body, while in the tomb, was under the keeping of his enemies ; from all which it is certain, that both his death and resurrection were real.

3. That he might fully satisfy the demands of the law and justice of God for our sins. 'The penal sentence of the law, justice was engaged to execute upon the sinner is in Gen. iii. 19. Our blessed Surety suffered this sentence for us, by descending in our stead to the dust of death, and laying his head in the grave.

4. That he might conquer death and the grave in their own territories. (Hos. xiii. 14.) He seized the dreadful dragon in its den ; he "swallowed up death in victory:" and, before he would part with death and the grave, he destroyed their cursed nature ; and abolished their enmity to his people, engaging them for ever to be the believer's friend ; for, saith the apostle, "if you are Christ's, death is yours." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.) Your privilege, your gain.

Improvement.

1. Are you crying out with tears, "iniquities prevail against me." Remember, that Christ died for

your sins, and continued under the power of death for a time, to destroy the power and being of sin.

2. Are you mourning for the death of dear and pious relations? Here is comfort, Jesus died, and was buried, and shall we think it hard to follow our dear relations to the grave, and leave them there, until the Lord come to awaken them, and raise them up at the last day to everlasting life.

3. Are you afraid of death and the grave? The Captain of your salvation has gone before you, through these black regions of death and the grave. By submitting to death, he hath overcome and abolished every thing that is evil in death. And he will be with you in death, that you may sing with holy David. (Ps. xxiii. 4.) And he will say to you, as he did to Jacob at Beersheba, in his way unto Egypt, Fear not, &c. Gen. xlii. 3, 4.

CHRIST'S JOY IN THE PROSPECT OF HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth, &c.
Psalm xvi. 9, 10.

THESE verses, with the eighth, are quoted by the Apostle Peter. (Acts ii. 25—32.) And applied by him to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Paul also applies the words in the same sense. (Acts xiii. 36—37.) From which it evidently appears, that the text is a prediction of the resurrection, and subsequent glory of Christ.

In discoursing from these words we shall,

I. Premise a few observations, which will tend to

give us a clearer view of the affections ascribed to the Redeemer, in prospect of his death, and entering into the state of the dead.

1. That the last sufferings of Christ were the most bitter, that ever were tasted from the beginning, or ever shall, to the end of the world: they were more than all the sufferings of the martyrs, or all men in the world put together; seeing that God laid on him the sins of the whole world. (1 John ii. 2.) He suffered all that men and devils, in their utmost rage and fury, could inflict, a shameful, painful, and a cursed death; his Father hid his face, and withdrew all sensible comforts from him. (Matt. xxvii. 46.) The punishment of our sins was laid upon him, the wrath of God due to us for our sins. Isa. liii. 10.

2. Jesus knew perfectly, before it came to pass, all that he was to suffer: many of his sufferings were foretold by the prophets; and he frequently spake of them to his disciples. John xviii. 4.

3. Jesus Christ, as an innocent, holy, and wise man, was suitably affected with such grievous sufferings, when they came upon him: his "soul was troubled; he was sore amazed, and very heavy, and was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" was in an agony, and sweat "great drops of blood;" and prayed that the "bitter cup might pass from him;" and laments his Father's absence. Matt. xxvii. 46:

4. In the midst of his sufferings he had such comforts, as effectually supported him under all his sorrow and sufferings; these comforts made him enter upon the work cheerfully, and go through it with submission and satisfaction. This leads us to consider,

II. The account of these as expressed in the text.

1. His heart was glad. He rejoiced for an entire

eternity in the prospect of redeeming mankind. (Prov. viii. 31.) The same was prophesied of him. (Ps. xl. 8.) It was his meat and drink to do it. (John iv. 34.) He could not endure any thing that tended to obstruct him in it. (Matt. xvi. 23.) He expressed earnest desire and longings after his sufferings and death. (Luke xii. 50.) When his enemies advanced, he went foremost to meet them. In the greatness of his agony he indeed complains to his Father; but he presently submits, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." He poured out his soul freely, willingly. (Isa. liii. 12.) He laid down his life, no one took it from him. John x. 18.

2. His glory rejoiced; that is, his tongue, as the Apostle Peter explains it. (Acts ii. 26.) The joy of his heart vented itself by his tongue, in songs of praise to God, and in triumphant shouts as a conqueror. He "rejoiced in spirit," and expresses this joy in thanksgiving to his Father. (Luke x. 21.) In manifesting his perfections. (John xvii. 6.) He gave thanks at the institution of the supper. (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27.) When Judas was gone to betray him, his tongue breaks out in a triumph of joy. (John xiii. 31, 32.) And he made a hymn of praise, a preface to his agony and bloody sweat. (Matt. xxvi. 30.) And having fully satisfied Divine justice, and the shines of his Father's countenance returning, he, with the voice of victory and triumph, cried, "it is finished," &c. John xix. 30.

3. His flesh was to rest in hope; that is, his whole manhood, both soul and body, shall rest in hope, shall dwell in a tabernacle confidently, so it is in the original; and is expressive of that calm serenity of mind which he felt through life, being confident that his sufferings would come to a happy issue. Shall rest in hope, under his greatest agonies and last sufferings,

whether from God or man; he should still be resigned and satisfied, patient and calm. (Isa. liii. 7; 1. 5, 6.) Shall rest in hope; his soul going to paradise, was to wait there for its reunion with the body. Shall rest in hope; that is, his pained, wearied, and tortured body lie down in the grave, as in a bed of rest, there to remain for a short time in hope of a speedy resurrection.

III. The ground of his comfort and triumphant joy, in the prospect of his sufferings and death.

It was the promises of God to him, and his unshaken faith in those promises.

1. He was promised assistance and strength to carry him successfully through all, verses 8, 9. Also Isa. xlii. 5—7. And Jesus expresses himself on this subject in the sublimest strains. Isa. l. 7—9.

2. He was promised the countenance of Jehovah, and he gave them the tokens of it in his lowest estate: he promised that he would not leave his soul in hell; that is, the hypostatical union should be continued, even while he was in the state of the dead: and that he would give him the singular privilege to preserve his body from the least taint of corruption while in the grave. "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

3. A speedy and glorious resurrection: "thou wilt shew me the path of life; therefore my heart is glad," &c. And when he foretold to his disciples his death, he comforted them by telling them that he would rise again.

4. The joy and gladness he would have in heaven, in the enjoyment of the promised glory there. (Ps. xvi. 11.) Somewhat differently expressed by the apostle. (Acts ii. 28.) Where he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. Isa. liii. 10, 11.

5. His unshaken faith in these promises: he was persuaded his Father's presence would be with him, that he would raise him from the dead the third day, give him the promised glory in heaven, that he should see his seed. By this faith he looked through all those black and dismal clouds which surrounded him, to "the joy set before him." This faith continued under the sense of his Father's displeasure, and while he felt the outward and inward force of his frowns; and for this faith, the chief priests, &c. mocked him upon the cross. Matt. xxvii. 41.

Improvement.

1. Let us, from what has been said, behold the amazing love of Jesus Christ to us, and endeavour to return him our best affections. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; 1 John iv. 19.

2. Let us imitate the affections of Jesus in dying for us, when we partake of the Lord's supper. Let us do it with gladness of heart, with triumphant praises of the Redeemer and his love, with a lively expectation of receiving all the blessings which he hath purchased for us by his death, and in the exercise of a lively faith, that we may spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood; and so prove his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, that we may have eternal life. John vi. 54—56.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel.—
2 Tim. ii. 8.

THE remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a duty at all times, and is of the greatest use and benefit in the Christian life. This the holy apostle sufficiently sheweth, by presenting it upon Timothy, as of great influence to make him steadfast and constant in the duties both of a minister and a Christian, notwithstanding the greatest sufferings. For having in the preceding verses exhorted him to this constancy, that he might urge and enable him to it, he saith in the text, "Remember," &c.

In speaking upon this subject, I shall,

I. Premise some things for the better understanding it.

1. That the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was only in his human nature in which he died; and as his body and soul continued as much personally united to his divine nature in his death as it was before; his resurrection consisted in the reunion of his soul with his body; and of consequence, his reviving and rising out of the grave, to an eternal and happy life, in his human nature.

2. That his resurrection is a fact sufficiently attested, and supported by the most unquestionable evidence. (See Acts xiii. 30, 31; and i. 3.) And that those were a great number of witnesses, who knew him, saw him frequently, and conversed with him after his resurrection, is abundantly manifest from

New Testament history, a summary of which, the Apostle Paul gives. (1 Cor. xv. 4—9.) And as this fact was an accomplishment of the Old Testament prophecies, and of his own frequent predictions, that he was to rise again; so the witnesses of it to the world, were of such a character, and were in such circumstances, as they neither could be deceived themselves, nor would they deceive the world to whom they were sent as witnesses of it.

II. Shew what it is concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ we should remember.

1. We should remember who he is who rose again from the dead. That he is the Son of God; and according to the flesh, the seed and offspring of David. (Gal. iv. 4.) Who declared to the world for three years and a half that he was the Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Christ who was to come into the world, according to promises and predictions, from the fall of Adam; which he proved by signs and wonders, and witnessed by his death. We should remember, that he was unjustly put to death by Pilate, at the instigation of the Jews, for his declaring himself to be the Son of God; the Messiah that was to come; and that was he who died to satisfy divine justice for our sins. All this the apostles insisted much upon in all their sermons; see the 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, and 13 chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

2. By whom he was raised from the dead. It was by the power of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; whose power is one and the same; and therefore his resurrection is the indivisible work of the blessed Trinity; and common to the Three Persons. It is indeed frequently ascribed in a peculiar manner to the Father, because he, in the economy of our redemption,

sustained the person of a judge, to whom satisfaction was made; and, as the delivering of Christ to death, belonged to him, on the same account it belonged to him as judge, by his warrant and authority, to deliver Christ from prison and judgment by his resurrection from the dead. He rose also by his own power. John x. 18.

3. The manner and properties of Christ's resurrection. That he rose with the same body wherein he died, and which was laid in the grave, retaining all its essential properties; that he rose early in the morning of the first day of the week, and upon the third day, from his death according to the Scripture, types, and prophecies, and his own predictions of it; he rose no sooner, that it might be evident he was really dead; and no later, because the Holy One of God was not to see corruption; that he rose with awful majesty (Matt. xxviii. 2—4); that he rose as a public person (1 Cor. xv. 22, 23.); that his resurrection was accompanied with that of many of the saints. Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

4. The end of Christ's resurrection. That God might be glorified, as the supreme End; that the Scriptures might be fulfilled; that a foundation might be laid for the faith and hope of sinners in God by him. (1 Pet. i. 21.) That he might enter into that glory promised to him as mediator, as the reward of his obedience unto the death. (Rom. xiv. 9.) That he might execute his offices in an exalted state, in order to the application of his purchased redemption to mankind; hence we are saved by his life, as well as reconciled to God by his death. Rom. v. 10.

5. The fruits of his resurrection, and the advantages we derive therefrom. We are thereby assured, that he is that which he declared himself to be. (Rom.

1. 4.) That justice is fully satisfied for our sins, and eternal redemption obtained for us by his sufferings and death. Our justification is a fruit of his resurrection. (Rom. iv. 26.) His death indeed is the meritorious cause of our justification; but his death would have been of no efficacy for this, if he had not risen again. In his resurrection he was justified as our surety, and we virtually in him! his resurrection is declarative of this. Upon this ground the apostle declares the believer's exemption from condemnation. (Rom. viii. 34.) Our regeneration and life of sanctification, from its commencement to its completion, is the fruit of his resurrection. (Rom. vi. 3—5, &c.) Our resurrection to everlasting life; his resurrection, being the pledge, assurance, argument, and certain cause of ours; see 1 Cor. xv. Eternal salvation, and the hope of it, is another fruit of his resurrection. 1 Peter i. 1. 3, 4.

III. How we should remember Christ's resurrection, so as to feel the saving influence of it upon our own hearts; and in order thereto, we must

1. Have some distinct knowledge of the history of Jesus Christ, for, without this, the remembrance of it can be of little avail.

2. The doctrine of his resurrection must be firmly believed by us. Rom. x. 8, 9.

3. We must remember it with application of it to ourselves. Rom. vi. 6.

4. With praise and thanksgiving. 1 Pet. i. 3.

5. Labour by earnest prayers to God, by faith in Christ's resurrection; by a diligent use of outward means, to experience and feel the power of Christ's resurrection, and that divine power exerted which raised him from the dead, upon our own souls, as did

Paul. (Phil. iii. 8. 10.) And he prays for the Ephesians that they might know, &c. (Ephes. i. 16—20.) This feeling of the power of Christ's resurrection, will be an effectual mean to help you to a right remembrance of it. Godly and spiritual conversation is also an excellent mean for this; when the two disciples were going to Emmaus, and were discoursing of Christ, he joined himself to them, discourses with them about his resurrection, and makes them feel its influence warming their hearts. Above all, keep communion with the Holy Spirit: employ him, address him, depend and wait upon him, to enable you to remember, in a right manner, Christ's resurrection from the dead; for it is his office to bring all things concerning Jesus Christ to our remembrance.

Improvement.

1. Let the wicked tremble on the account of their unbelief; he who arose from the dead in terrible majesty, the keepers of his sepulchre, becoming as dead men, shall ere long judge them for their infidelity. Acts xvii. 30, 31.

2. Let the righteous rejoice; Christ lives to die no more, and because he lives, we shall live (John xiv. 19.) to his glory in this world, and with him in heaven to all eternity. Rom. xiv. 7—9.

**THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST, THE HAPPINESS
OF THE SAINTS.**

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life. In thy presence is
fulness of joy, &c.—Psalm xvi. 11,*

THESE words originally belong to Christ, being applied by David to him, in the spirit of prophecy, as will evidently appear from the connexion in which they stand. They are also applicable to the real Christian, and are expressive of the happiness and joy he expects in a future state. Joy is the soul's rest and satisfaction in the enjoyment of a suitable good. Such as the good and enjoyment are, such will be the joy. The most perfect enjoyment of the most perfect good, must, therefore, cause the most perfect joy. Such is the joy of the blessed in heaven. It consists in being in Christ's immediate presence, and partaking of that fulness of joy, and those pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

Consider,

I. The character of those who shall be thus blessed: they are such as,

1. Repent of their sins, and are converted: who cease to do evil and learn to do well. Upon these the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. Acts iii. 19.

2. Believe in Christ, with a divine, practical, purifying faith. Rev. vii. 14, 15.

3. Upright in their profession and performance of commanded duties, both to God and man. Psalm clx. 13.

4. His servants, who follow him as their Lord and

Master, and his imitable life as their copy and pattern. John xii. 26.

5. To conclude this head, if any require, as the Psalmist did, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? I answer as he did; he that hath clean hands, &c. Ps. xxiv. 3, 4.

II. Wherein their blessedness consists; and according to the text, it is occasioned, by being in the presence of God; and by that fulness of joy and pleasure, which are at his right hand.

The presence of God here spoken of, is

1. The presence of his glory, the most conspicuous lustre of his excellences, or his perfections shining in the highest excellency of their brightness. Jude 24.

2. The presence of his face, as it is in the original text; "In thy face, or being before thy face, is fulness of joy." The presence of his glory, which is hidden here, will be unveiled in heaven, and presented openly to view, without veil or shadow. (1 Peter iv. 13.) For we shall see him face to face, &c. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

3. His immediate presence; no longer manifested through obscuring mediums: here we have his presence in creatures, in providences, and in ordinances; but in heaven we shall enjoy him immediately, and without the intervention of means. Rev. xxi. 22, 23; xxii. 5.

4. His countenancing presence, so the apostle explains the text. (Acts ii. 28.) It is his presence as a pleased friend, father, and husband. To these he gives the presence of his pleased face, without a frown, and the light of his countenance without an intervening cloud. As his anger kindleth hell, so his favour,

the light and smiles of his countenance, make heaven, see Rev. xxi. 3. compared with Zeph. iii. 17.

5. His fixed and abiding presence : we shall be for ever with him, and he shall dwell among us. Rev. vii. 17.

6. His influxive and efficacious presence : a glimpse of it made the face of Moses shine. As it is reflected in the glass of the gospel ; it changeth them that behold it into the same image from glory to glory : much more will it change you, who shall stand before his face in heaven, into the most perfect likeness of him in holiness and happiness your natures are capable of. 1 John iii. 2.

Their happiness is also occasioned by those joys and pleasures which are at God's right hand. Heaven is a situation of joy and pleasure, very different from our present situation, which is a state of tribulation and distress. (John xvi. 33.) The joy and pleasures of the heavenly world are,

1. Spiritual and heavenly. Not carnal or earthly. Our bodies shall be spiritual, so far, as not to need any of these supports and refreshments they do now. There will be no need of sleep, of meat and drink, of marrying and giving in marriage ; but we shall be as the angels of God in heaven. (Matt. xii. 25 ; 1 Cor. vi. 13.) The more noble senses of seeing and hearing, the pleasure of which is mixed with reason, shall subsist, be spiritualized, and eternally satisfied with glorified objects, the chief of which shall be the glorified body of the son of God. It is the joy of the Lord the saints enter into, the same for kind, though not for degree.

2. Pure, without mixture. Here there is a mixture of good and evil. Heaven and hell are the extremes. Hell is a place of animated torment, heaven of un-

mixed joy : no sin there : no temptation or occasion of sinning : no serpent hissing in that paradise : all sorrow and cause of sorrow shall be done away. Rev. vii. 16; xxi. 4.

3. A multitude without number. There is not only a removal of every evil, but the presence and enjoyment of every good. The blessedness of heaven is resembled by every real good known to us here, all the glory and honour of the kings of the earth shall be there. (Rev. xxi. 24—26.) God who is an infinite and universal good, will feast his saints with fresh discoveries and communications of delight and wonder. Isa. lx. 19.

4. Full without any want. There every one shall enjoy a whole heaven, with all the felicities of it, and are blessed in every part in soul and body ! all our wants shall be supplied, and our desires satisfied. Ps. xvii. 15.

5. Constant without diminution or interruption. Here our best enjoyments are often changeable and interrupted ; but the joys of heaven shall never fade away. (1 Pet. i. 3, 4.) God who is the source of their happiness remains unchangeably the same. The saints are fixed in his presence, and their happiness shall not be diminished on account of their number ; as in nature, every man hath a sun to himself, the same as if there were but one man in the world. Nor will it be diminished on account of the length of the enjoyment ; for the Divine presence is an eternal spring of pleasure. Ps. xxxvi. 9.

6. Perpetual. They are pleasures for evermore ; all the felicities of heaven are everlasting ; everlasting consolation, everlasting joy, everlasting habitations, everlasting life. It is this that maketh heaven to be

heaven indeed ; all its pleasures would be imperfect without it. It is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Improvement.

1. Hence see the folly and madness of those who seek their portion in this life ; in carnal and sensual gratifications ; dreadful will be their state at last. Ps. xcvi. 3 ; Matt. xxv. 41.

2. Let such glorious views and expectations comfort the heirs of glory in the midst of all their tribulations. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. Let it excite all such to diligence and activity in the ways of God. This is the very use the apostle makes of this doctrine. 1 Cor. xv. 58 ; Heb. xii. 1, 2,

CHRIST'S GLORIOUS APPEARING AT THE END OF THE WORLD.

And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Matt. xxiv. 30.

THIS chapter containeth a discourse of our Lord, to his disciples, as he sat with them upon the mount of Olives, in answer to a twofold question they put to him. (ver. 3.) When the destruction of the temple, and city of Jerusalem should be ? and what were the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world ?

Jesus Christ designs himself in the text, the Son of man, and at several other times when he speaks of his coming to judgment, because he will come and judge the world visibly in his human nature, so as he may be seen and heard of all the world. They shall see the Son of man, &c.

Consider,

I. What that glory is in which the Lord Jesus Christ will appear at the end of the world.

1. In his own glory, as mediator, which he entered into when he ascended (Luke xxiv. 26.); as the reward of his sufferings and death. (Eph. i. 20—23.) In his own glory as Judge of all, unto whom they must bow, and from whom they must receive their final doom. (Phil. ii. 8, 9.) His blessed soul shall be filled with a joy, beyond measure; and his blessed body will be brighter, in shining glory, than ten thousand, thousand suns. This bright glory now fills heaven. (Rev. xxi. 13.) When he comes, it will fill this visible world, and make the sun and moon disappear.

2. In the glory of his Father; that is, in the glory of the Godhead, as he is equal with God; his Father, and he are one (John x. 30.); and so their glory is one. This glory was veiled in his humiliation, by his human nature; but in his exaltation it was again manifested, and brake forth into a brightness and splendour becoming God. This was what he prayed for. (John xvii. 5.) At his second appearing, there will be the appearance of the great God. (Tit. ii. 13.) He will then shine in the glory of his Omniscience. (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Of his truth. (Matt. xxiv. 35.) Of his justice. (Ps. xcvi. 13.) Of his matchless mercy, love, goodness, and grace. (Rom. ix. 23.) Of his power, so says the text; which will gloriously be manifested in raising the dead, gathering all into one place, making every knee bow before his awful tribunal, executing the sentence he will pronounce, changing heaven and earth, and in making all things new; and in this last mentioned, he will manifest the glory of his own eternity, for while he shall change all things, he himself shall remain the same unchangeable God. Ps. cii. 25—27.

3. In the glory of all the mighty angels. (Matt. xxv. 31.) The whole court of heaven shall attend upon the Judge of the world, that they may be present with him at this great act. There is an innumerable company of angels. (Heb. xii. 22.) Ten thousand times ten thousand. (Dan. vii. 10.) They will come with him to minister to him. (Matt. xxiv. 31. See also Matt. xiii. 40, 41.) You read, (Rev. xviii. 1.) of the earth's being lightened with one angel coming down from heaven; but what glory shall attend the appearance of all the mighty angels, surrounding the great Judge, descending visibly from heaven?

II. Some things which evidence the greatness of this glory in which Jesus Christ will come.

1. It appears from what has been already said; it is not the glory of all the mighty angels; we could not endure the glory of one of them in this mortal state, it would confound all mankind met together. What must be their glory when united? It is his own glory as Mediator, the reward of his sufferings as low as hell, and which his human nature hath from the personal union, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling therein, and so a glory which no mere creature is capable of. It is the essential glory of the great God, and this is incomprehensible, incomparable, and infinite.

2. You may form some idea of it, from some preceding appearances upon lesser occasions. How great was the glory he appeared in when he gave the law upon mount Sinai! (Exod. xix. 16—18.) If his glory at the giving of the law was so great, what will it be, when he comes to call men to an account for the keeping of it? When Isaiah received his commission from him, (Isa. vi. 1—4.) it confounded him, and made him cry out, Woe is me, &c. (ver. 5.) When he

was transfigured. (Matt. xvii. 2.) When he appeared to Paul on his way to Damascus. Acts xxvi. 13.

3. The antecedent and immediate forerunners of the coming and appearance of Jesus Christ, discover something of the greatness of his glory, at his second coming, all of which are very awful and dreadful. There will be a dreadful commotion in this lower world. (Matt. xxiv. 29; Luke xxi. 25, 26.) Some glorious appearance, which is called the sign of the Son of Man in our text, which, perhaps, will be some beams of majesty and glory, that will pass through the heavens like lightning. (Matt. xxiv. 27.) A great shout (1 Thess. iv. 16.); some say of all the holy angels, or the voice of Christ himself. (Heb. xii. 26; John v. 28.) The voice of the archangel, which, perhaps, will be heard above all the rest, saying, Behold, &c. (Matt. xxv. 6.) The trump of God (1 Thess. iv. 16); that is, a mighty trumpet, as the Hebrews call things of unusual greatness, things of God; as great trees, trees of God; great mountains, mountains of God: by it the dead will be summoned from their graves (1 Cor. xv. 52); and all collected. (Matt. xxiv. 31.) And O! this will be a tremendous blast to the ungodly! Flaming fire. (Ps. l. 3, 4; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.) The glory of the throne on which he will sit. (Matt. xxv. 31.) It is said to be high and lifted up. (Isa. vi. 1. See Dan. vii. 9, 10; Rev. xx. 11.) All these circumstances tend to shew the greatness of his glory, when he shall come at the end of the world.

III. Why the Lord Jesus will come the second time in so great glory.

1. As a recompense to him for his abasement. He came at first in obedience to his Father, humble, lowly, despised, spit upon, and crucified. To make

him amends for this, and to wipe off the scandal and offence of it, he shall come in power and great glory. This was foretold of him. Ps. cx. 7; see also Phil. ii. 6—10.

2. He will come in great glory, to beget a great reverence and awe in all who are to be judged by him. This will make all knees bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust. To this purpose the Psalmist speaketh prophetically. Ps. lxxii. 9.

3. That all the world may see it; and his people thereby be made glad with exceeding joy (1 Peter iv. 13); and that his enemies may see what they have lost, by being shut out from the sight and enjoyment of this glory.

4. That he may carry home his saints as his bride, with greater state and solemnity unto his Father's house, where he hath prepared mansions for them. He will not send, but come himself, in all his glory, as a royal bridegroom cometh, with all the flower of his court, to bring home his espoused wife. (John xiv. 3.) Then the voice of the multitude will be heard, or in Rev. xix. 6, 7.

Improvement.

1. If Christ will come in such glory, how terrible will his coming be to infidels who count him an impostor! To mere nominal Christians, who are dead while they live. (2 Thess. i. 7—9.) To those who are ashamed of him, and his words. (Mark viii. 38.) To those who would never submit themselves to his laws in their lives and conversation, but continued in rebellion against him. (Jude xiv. 15.) To those who have not employed their talents of time, gifts, health, and power, given them for the service and glory of God, but have laid out all on their own selfish ends,

and the gratification of their sensual desires. Matt. xxv. 30, 31.

2. How consolatory is the consideration of the second glorious appearing of Jesus Christ to the real Christian. He who comes in this great glory, is he who hath loved us. Every thing will be removed from such, that would make them afraid of this glorious appearance. Yea, at his appearance, such shall appear with him in glory. (Col. iii. 4.) The voice of the archangel shall be, to such, the sweetest melody, for such will be his language, "Awake, sing, ye that dwell in the dust; rise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee for ever and ever."

THE NEGATIVE HAPPINESS OF THE SAINTS IN
HEAVEN.

And there shall be no more curse.—Rev. xxii. 3.

THIS, and the two following verses, conclude a magnificent description of that happiness which remaineth for the people of God in the heavenly world, begun in the 10th verse of the preceding chapter. Some interpreters apply it to a state of the church, before the end of time; but this is neither suitable to the grandeur of the expression, nor to the evident scope of this vision, which is to describe the happy condition of those written in the "Lamb's book of life." There can be no perfect blessedness, without a full removal of all evil, and possession of all good; and this is what the words of the text assures us the saints shall enjoy in heaven: there shall be no more curse.

Consider,

I. Who the persons are who shall be thus highly favoured; the particulars of their character are,

1. They have been called by the word (2 Peter iii. 9.); and convinced by the Spirit, of sin, of unbelief. (John xvi. 9.) Have been deeply affected on the account of it, and alarmed for the consequences. Acts xvi. 30.

2. Have received Christ as offered in the gospel, by a lively faith, through which their freedom from the curse is begun in this life. John v. 24.; Gal. iii. 13.

3. They love Christ; and consequently are delivered from the dreadful anathemas denounced against those who do not love him. 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

4. It is their care and endeavour, as a fruit of this love to Christ, to give sincere, universal, and constant obedience to his commands. Rev. xxii. 14.

5. They consider it as heaven to be where God and his Christ are, to serve him, and to enjoy him for ever. Phil. i. 23.

6. They are careful to maintain good works, particularly works of charity, towards the members of Jesus Christ. The question will not be at last, have you prophesied in my name? heard me preach in your streets? eaten and drank in my presence? but have you, according to your ability, clothed my people who were naked, &c.? if you are such, you belong to those who shall be delivered from all curse for ever. Matt. xxv. 34—41.

II. The happiness of those who shall be thus highly favoured according to the language of the text. There shall be no more curse.

1. There will be no more sin in such, or ever done by them to occasion any curse: they are the just made

perfect. (Heb. xii. 23.) No sin can enter the New Jerusalem. (xxi. 2. 27.) It will be a glorious church, without wrinkle. Ephes. v. 27 ; Psalm lxviii. 13.

2. There will be no more wrath in God, to inflict any curse: once he was angry with them, on account of sin. (Isa. xii. 1 ; Psalm xxxviii. 3.) But it shall not be so any more. Ezek. xvi. 42.

3. There will be no more sentence passed against them including a curse. Once they were subject to that tremendous sentence. (Gal. iii. 10.) But never shall any more. John v. 24.

4. There shall be no more curse, includes security against every degree of separation from God, and the communion of the church above. (Rev. iii. 12.) Here we sometimes complain with Job, xxiii. 8, 9 ; but there we shall have his presence for ever. (Rev. xxi. 3.) And this is what our blessed Saviour desired for us of the Father. John xvii. 21—23.

5. There shall be no more curse, includes an exemption from all the evils of affliction and sufferings, which are included in the curse of the law, and which real Christians so frequently endure here. (Isa. xxxv. 10.) In that happy world, there will be no doubt or fear ; no accusations of conscience ; no sickness or disease ; no hunger, thirst, nakedness, want (Rev. vii. 16, 17.) ; no toil in religious duties, or labouring for the meat that perishes (Rev. xiv. 13 ; Isa. xiv. 3.) ; no David lamenting over his Absalom (2 Sam. xviii. 33.) ; no minister bewailing on account of "many who have sinned," the little good effect of his ministry ; but that Scripture shall be fully accomplished. Rev. xxi. 4.

Lastly : there shall be no person who is a curse, or is accursed among the inhabitants of the New Jeru-

salem. Here the tares are mixed with the wheat; but there they shall be separated for ever. (Rev. xxi. 27.) In this world you may remove from church to church, from family to family, from country to country; you may remove from one end of the world to another, to avoid the society of the wicked; but the apostle tells that we cannot, unless we go out of the world. (1 Cor. v. 10.) In the next world, there will be a thorough separation, according to our Lord's words in the double parable of the sower and the net. Matt. xiii. 26—47.

III. Whence it is, that the persons already described are thus blessed.

1. The love of God the Father, is the original cause of their blessedness. (1 Thess. v. 9.) He has chosen them in Christ. (Ephes. i. 3—12.) And they are the blessed of the Father. Matt. xxv. 34.

2. The death of Christ, is the meritorious cause of their blessedness. Gal. iii. 13.

3. The Holy Ghost, with his gracious influences, is the efficient cause. Gal. iii. 13, 14; 2 Cor. v. 5; Ps. cxliii. 10.

4. The blessed Jesus will at the last day; publicly and solemnly justify all such, as the Judge of all, adjudge them to eternal blessedness in heaven, and put them into the actual and full possession of it. Jude 24.

Lastly: that there shall be no more curse in heaven to such, is, because "the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it for ever." This is the reason given in this verse for their blessedness.

Improvement.

1. How pleasing are the prospects of the real Christian, as to a future state; here his felicity is only

begun, there it shall be consummated. **Matt. xxv. 34.**

2. How dreadful shall be the future state of the finally impenitent; for ever shut out of heaven, from the society of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost; of holy angels; and the wisest, the holiest, the best of men that ever lived: to feel the tremendous effects of the curse, of the law, and the wrath of God for ever. **Psalm ix. 17; Matt. xxv. 41.**

THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

And his servants shall serve him.—**Rev. xxii. 3.**

CHRISTIANS frequently complain that all the services they do for their Lord are but little, imperfect, and hardly deserving the name of service, against this, there is a threefold ground of consolation; that the satisfaction of Christ is the only and sufficient mean for the acceptance of our persons and services with God, and obtaining salvation with eternal glory; that their sincere endeavours to serve the Lord, are accepted, according to the covenant of grace, as evangelical perfection: and also that the day is near, when their service shall be of the most exalted nature: then, indeed, his servants shall serve him.

Consider,

I. The character of God's servants here, who shall serve him afterward in heaven.

1. This is not the character of any man by nature: all are naturally enemies to God. (**Col. i. 21.**) The servants of sin. **Rom. vi. 17.**

2. They are such as have mourned on account of their enmity and sin (Matt. v. 4.); having returned to God with weeping, mourning, and lamentation, &c. Joel ij. 12.

3. They have felt the efficacy of the blood of Christ, through faith, justifying and cleansing from sin. Rev. vii. 14, 15.

4. They have renounced all other lords and masters. (Rom. vi. 17, 18.) Have renounced their idols. (Hosea xiv. 8.) Calling God, their Lord. (Ps. xvi. 2.) Have joined themselves to him, to serve him. (Isa. lvi. 6.) And can say with Paul, the love of Christ constraineth us, &c. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

5. They have devoted themselves to the fear of the Lord, not a slavish, but a filial fear of him : they have a habitual, reverent awe of his divine Majesty ; and study in all things to please him. Psalm cxix. 38 ; Neh. i. 11.

6. They have humbling views of their own character and services (1 Tim. i. 15 ; Luke xvii. 10.) ; and are " of the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

II. The service in which such shall be employed in the heavenly state.

In our present circumstances we can know but little of it. (John iii. 2.) But from what is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, we may observe, that as to the nature of the heavenly service, it is,

1. A service which does not imply a state of trial and probation. Preaching and hearing, &c. will then cease, as having attained their end. (Rev. xxi. 22.) Faith and hope shall be lost in vision and fruition. (1 Cor. xiii. 8—13.) Our prayers shall be ended, hav-

ing no more wants, having all things immediately in God and the Lamb. Every relative duty shall cease. (Ephes. vi. 5. 9; Luke xx. 35, 36.) In one word, no service shall be required in heaven that implies imperfection. 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

2. It implies all those duties which the relations between God and the saints require, as their Creator and Redeemer. (Rev. xiv. 4; James i. 18.) This will have its full accomplishment in heaven. Time would fail to instance every particular. Love will be exercised in an exalted degree. Fear also, an awful and reverent respect of the divine Majesty. Psalm lxxxix. 7.

3. It will be such as the angels of God are employed in. They are employed in immediate acts of adoration and worship (Rev. v. 11, 12; vii. 9—12.); where saints and angels worship and adore together: and they make but one congregation, "an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first born." They are farther employed to execute his will and pleasure upon earth. (Heb. i. 14.) The Scriptures intimate that the saints shall be so employed. Moses and Elias were employed at our Lord's transfiguration on the mount. And the angel sent to John (Rev. xix. 10.); calls himself John's "fellow-servant, and one of his brethren;" which must have been one of the departed prophets or apostles.

4. It will be service of special and immediate attendance. Here we serve him in the vineyard, but there it will be in the palace of the great King, in his presence-chamber. (Luke xxi. 36.) The words of Sheba's queen to Solomon, shall be strictly applicable to the redeemed in heaven. 1 Kings x. 8.

5. It will be the service of rulers and governors. (Matt. xxv. 20—23.) They shall tread down Satan, and all their enemies (Ps. xxi. 9.); and those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him in heaven. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

6. It is a sabbath-service; for there remaineth “a rest for the people of God:” in the original, a sabbatism, or sabbath-keeping. (Heb. iv. 9.) Not a rest in idleness, but in the most exalted acts of holy worship.

7. It will also consist in the performance of all the duties of love to the saints. There we shall know each other. Ministers shall know those who are the fruit of their labours, as their “crown and joy in heaven” (1 Thess. ii. 19.): and the people shall know those ministers who were the instruments of their conversion, &c. (2 Cor. i. 14.) And those who have partook of the bounty of the pious rich, shall know their benefactors, and, perhaps, be commissioned to attend them in their dying moments, and convey them to heaven; on which account they are said to receive such into everlasting habitations. (Luke xvi. 9.) Loving each other, they shall rejoice in each other’s happiness. They shall converse with angels, and with each other, and entertain one another with the most excellent discourses; as Moses and Elias talked with Christ and one another in the transfiguration. They will talk of all his wonderful works, and praise him in the most exalted strains; as David, when he said, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!”

And as to the manner of this service, it will be,

1. Without weakness. There is much weakness in all our expressions, when we worship before him.

Our hearts, our graces, our souls, our bodies, are all weak, which make our services weak, but in heaven all our weakness shall be done away: "the body which is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power."

2. Without weariness. Whatever made duties wearisome in the service of God here, shall be done away in heaven; there shall be rest from our labour. Rev. xiv. 13.

3. Without distraction. Worldly cares and fears often distract our mind, while serving the Lord here, but in heaven there will be nothing from within, or without, to distract our minds in the service of God. Then the saints will be able to say, in the utmost extent. "my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; I will sing and praise."

4. Without interruption and intermission. There shall be no impediment from business, or need of sleep, attention to clothing, meat or drink; they shall serve him day and night in his temple." Rev. vii. 15.

5. Without the least defect, imperfection, or sin. They shall be without fault before the throne of God. Rev. xiv. 5.

6. For ever, even to eternity. Their joys shall be eternal, so shall be their thankful services. Surely David intended this, when he said, again and again, "While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God, while I have any being." Ps. cxlvi. 2.

III. That all those who serve God here shall assuredly serve him in heaven; and the grounds of this assurance are,

1. The grace of God, and his intentions concerning us. 2 Tim. i. 9; Rom. viii. 30.

2. The merit and intercession of Christ, who hath redeemed us from among men, as the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb (Rev. xiv. 4.); and upon the ground of this redemption, he prays, that where he is, there we may be also. John xvii. 24.

3. The Spirit's work upon the mind. It is he who makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints (Col. i. 12); and seals his servants to the day of redemption (Eph. iv. 30.); and leads them into heaven, the land of uprightness. Ps. cxliii. 10.

4. The faithfulness of God, who hath promised thus to honour his servants. John xii. 26.

Improvement.

1. Is it so, that those who serve him here, shall serve him in heaven hereafter; then how awful will be the state of those who serve the enemies of Christ, the world, the flesh, Satan, and sin. See their doom in Matt. xxiv. 51; Isa. lxv. 12—14.

2. Let the saints continue in their services to the Lord, and not desert him; for if they do, he will cast them off for ever, and will not admit them to serve him in heaven (1 Chron. xxviii. 9.); but if they continue faithful in his service they shall abide in his love and favour, (John xv. 10.) and if "faithful unto death, shall receive the crown of life." Rev. ii. 10.

3. Let them wait and watch for the coming of their Lord, in the way of their service and duty. Luke xii. 35, 36.

4. Let them long for the time when they shall be admitted to his throne, to see his face, saying, "O when shall I come and appear before God!"

5. Let them endeavour to be as like his servants in heaven, in serving him here, as they possibly can: be

much in the exercise of the duties of religion, because it is heavenly work, and shall be their blessed employment for ever.

CONSOLATIONS IN THE DEATH OF INFANTS.

In Ramah was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, &c.—Matt. ii. 18.

THESE words were originally spoken by the prophet Jeremiah concerning the lamentations of the people of Jerusalem, at the several captivities prophesied of in another chapter, under the moving representation of a tender mother bewailing her infant children; but it is applied here by the Evangelist to another purpose; the destruction of the children of Bethlehem, by Herod king of the Jews. (Matt. ii. 16—18.) This prophecy is said to be fulfilled in this event, not only accommodated to it, but the true sense of the prophecy, and which only had its literal and full accomplishment in it.

I shall consider the case of the death of infants, and the comforts which may be drawn from the Scriptures to sorrowful parents upon that account. This is a case which very frequently happens, and to most persons at some time or other of their lives. And a tender case it commonly is, especially to the weaker sex several circumstances often occur to render it grievous and compassionate; as, when it is the child of our youth, the hopes of a family; an only or a lovely child, endeared by little tendernesses of affection, and early buddings of reason and wisdom: and this is sometimes carried to great excess; indulgent mothers are apt to grieve as they are to love, to degrees of inordi-

nacy ; and, like Rachel, " mourn for their children, because they are not, and refuse to be comforted." " The dear image is always before my eyes ; methinks I see and hear it wherever I go ; I cannot put the thoughts of it out of my mind ; but, Oh ! the grief."

I shall propose the proper grounds of support, and method of relief in this case.

1. Consider the sovereignty, and dominion of the great God. We ourselves are more his than our own, and more entirely at his disposal. (Ps. c. 3 ; 1 Cor. vi. 20.) We are absolutely his, upon the highest claims of creation and redemption, as his creatures, and his purchase. God challenges a propriety in the lives of his creatures (Deut. xxxii. 39) ; yea, the prophet represents his right in the souls of his creatures, (Ezek. xviii. 4.) This must reasonably hold with greater strength, in the case of every enjoyment of life, as the nearest relation, and the best possession of this world. Holy Job acknowledges God's sovereignty in his afflictions and comforts himself with the consideration. Job i. 21.

2. Consider the righteousness of the Divine dispensation herein. God acts not only as an absolute, but as a wise and righteous sovereign ; he never acts with arbitrary will, or unreasonable pleasure ; he is always bound by his own perfections, though subject to no superior ; and can no more act unreasonably, than he can unjustly. Now, it is the just sentence of the broken law, and the natural effect of our fallen state that we become mortal. The awful sentence of death was the consequence of sin ; for this, " it is appointed for men once to die : " they must die some time or other. This is founded in reason and justice ; but the seasons and circumstances of our death is a reserve

of wisdom, and matter of pleasure, and lies in the breast of the Sovereign disposer and Lord of life.

Upon this ground, it is easy to account for the death of infants: they are under the common sentence of death: they are a part of the spoils and triumph of death in this world. The apostle says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." &c. (Rom. v. 12.) God, therefore, does no wrong, when he snatches a beloved child from a tender mother's arms. It was a noble saying of one of the ancients, upon the tidings of his son's death, "I knew that I begat a mortal."

3. Consider that no doubt can remain as to their future happiness. The guilt of Adam's transgression is atoned for, by the undertaking and death of Christ. (Rom. v. 18, 19.) And, as the guilt is taken away, no punishment for that sin, in a future state, can follow: and as children have no personal guilt of their own, their salvation in a future state is a necessary consequence: hence our Lord speaks as if heaven was principally occupied by these little innocents. Matt. xix. 13, 14.

4. They have answered the ends of their creation, and the purposes for which God sent them into the world. Indeed they make a short stay, and are less significant: they have lower capacities, and feebler powers, than those who grow to maturity. They are not capable of actual choice, or active service; but they serve to display the perfections and providence of God, and are so many instances of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness, in the nice circumstances of their birth, and the tender care watching over them in their infant state; or of his righteousness and faithfulness in executing the sentence of

death; perhaps of punishment and rebuke to over-indulgent parents, to try their faith and patience, or teach them submission and resignation to the divine will. It would be well, if those who die in advanced years, did but answer the end of their creation as well as those who die in an infant state.

5. We know not what they might have proved, if they had lived. Fond parents often please themselves with fair appearances and future prospects. See Ps. cxxvii. 4; cxxviii. 3; cxliv. 12.

It is a rare and singular blessing, where there are many children, for all to prove good. Sometimes by natural weakness, carelessness, or accident, they contract deformities, which disable them for the service of life (2 Sam. iv. 4); or prove wicked and rebellious, form unhappy connexions. (Gen. xxvi. 35.) And Rebecca tells Isaac, "If Jacob," &c. (xxvii. 46.) While others play the prodigal. (Luke xv. 12.) It is better they should go to an early grave, than they should live to be unhappy themselves, or a grief to us. I have been informed of the case of a fond mother, who passionately praying for the life of a sick child, whatever it cost her, she had her desire; but he lived to come to an untimely end, and to break her heart.

6. Perhaps you have other children remaining, and cannot use the words of the patriarch. (Gen. xliii. 14.) If one is taken away, there are others left, in whom we may take comfort. So we find Eve comforts herself upon the death of Abel. (Gen. iv. 25.) Instead of repining at the loss of one, look upon the surviving offspring with thankfulness. Ps. cxxviii. 3.

7. Suppose the worst circumstance; that it is an only child, or that all are removed from us. See the case of Job (i. 18); the widow of Nain. (Luke vii. 12.)

Consider, that we received an only child from the Lord, and every one of our children; for they are the heritage of the Lord, and his work. (Ps. cxxvii. 3.) They are his gift to us (Gen. xxiii. 5; xlviii. 9.); but then his right to them remains, and they are more his than ours. He is the Father of their spirits; we only the fathers of the flesh. And has he not the rightful disposal of what he hath freely given? Must he ask our leave to remove his own, or we complain of injury or unkindness? Besides, have we not made a covenant-surrender of all we have to God, without reserve? See the ready compliance of Abraham, in the case of his only son; but, above all, consider the unequalled love of God, who gave his Son, his only Son, for us. John iii. 16; Isa. liii. 6—10.

8. Consider your own covenant-state, however. Your covenant-interest is secure, whatsoever he removes from you, God is yours, and all the promises of the new covenant; Christ, the Son of God, is yours, and all the purchase of his blood. (1 Cor. iii. 22.) This was David's comfort under the breaches and disappointments of his family. (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) It is a greater mercy to have God for our Father, than to have the dearest child of our own; and to be ourselves children of God, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, than to have a numerous family, and the greatest prosperity of life. Isa. lvi. 5.

9. We must quickly go to them, and be with them again. It is not an everlasting separation, or parting with them for good and all: it is only for a time. It is only the distance of the two worlds and states, which is sometimes only a single step; or, it may be, the difference of a breath. The two worlds border upon and are contiguous to each other. In a

little while, the veil which divides the two worlds shall be drawn aside, and a new scene of things will open. We shall find ourselves agreeably surprised, and see them again, and enjoy them to greater advantage, never again to feel the pang of separation. So David comforted himself upon the death of his child by Bathsheba. (2 Sam. xii. 22.) The tender infant, or beloved child, has only got the start, and is gone a little before. Prepare to follow, instead of grieving immoderately; turn the stream into a right channel; dry up the tears from thine eyes, and refuse not to be comforted; for thou shalt see them again in the other world, and be with them for ever. In the mean time, there is this consolation left, that although thou hast brought forth children for the grave, yet they are brought for God, and for heaven too; and though thou hast never a child left in this world, there are so many more gone before thee to heaven.

THE HAPPY END OF A USEFUL LIFE.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep.—Acts xiii. 36.

THE words are part of the apostle's discourse at Antioch, and relate to the proof that Jesus is the true Messiah promised to the fathers, "because God raised him from the dead" (verse 30): and this was evident, in that "he was seen many days of them who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who were his witnesses to the people." (verse 31.) And he was raised from the dead with this peculiar circumstance, "now no more to see corruption: death hath no more domi-

nion over him (Rom. vi. 9); as it had in the case of Lazarus and the widow's son.

The words of our text contain the character and description of a good and useful man, in the person of David. In speaking to them, I shall consider,

I. The character of his useful life: "He served his own generation by the will of God."

1. His life is a state of service. David had the peculiar commendation of being "a man after God's own heart; i. e. of great sincerity, and entire devotedness to God. He did much; and had it in his heart to do more for God (Acts vii. 46); "and was zealous for the Lord." (Ps. lxxix. 10.) He was faithful to the interest of God in an exalted station, for many years together, in the main bent and course of his life, though not without his imperfections and faults; like a flaw in a diamond, or a spot in the body of the sun, yet, with the clearest marks of a sound and deep repentance.

A Christian's whole life is a state of service and warfare: we are to work the works of God, and contend with our spiritual enemies; our situation is like that of the Jews mentioned in Neh. ix. 17. The apostle represents this by a hearty devotedness to Christ, and engagement in his service (Acts xxvi. 17, 18.); and makes it matter of solemn appeal and thanksgiving to God. (Rom. i. 9; 2 Tim. i. 3.) This is made the end of our redemption by Christ (Luke i. 74); "He redeems us from all iniquity, that we should be zealous of good works." (Tit. ii. 14.) And it is the ultimate view, in all the duties of every relation, that we serve the Lord Christ (Col. iii. 24); and the opposite term, of the Christian's conversion from his gentile state. (1 Thess. i. 9.) And this service must be

done heartily, with the united exercise of all our powers. Rom. xii. 12.

2. He serves his generation. David was of a public spirit, and serviceable to others as well as to himself. He was useful, both as a ruler and a prophet, to the church and to the world. (Ps. lxxviii. 72.) The word we render generation, signifies also age; he was a blessing to the age, or generation, in which he lived. The one refers to the people among whom he lived; the other to the period of time in which he lived.

A good man is a public good, and makes others about him the better for him: "he looks not at his own things," &c. (Phil. ii. 4.) Paul calls himself the servant of all (1 Cor. ix. 19); and all things to all men (ver. 22); and a debtor to all. (Rom. i. 14.) He imitates his Lord, who went about doing good to the bodies and the souls of men. He strives to do good to his neighbours and friends, to the world at large, and especially to the church. (Gal. vi. 10.) And for this reason, the death of a good man is a public loss: the world loses a friend and benefactor.

3. He is especially concerned to serve his own generation. David served his own generation: and although he was serviceable to after-ages, by his victories, writings, and preparations for building the temple, yet that which is particularly remarked here is, that "he served his own generation." And every good man is taught by his example, to be serviceable to the generation and age in which he lives: he should improve his talents and trusts with faithful diligence, to every purpose of the divine glory, and all the interests of the kingdom of God in the world: he should make his own hands and eyes, as much as may be,

his executors and overseers. Some are so careful to do good to posterity, that the world is more beholden to death, than to them, for all the good they do: and what they leave is often misapplied; or mismanaged, by unfaithfulness and neglect; and, it may be, in a course of years, entirely sunk and lost.

4. This service is measured and determined by the divine will. "He served his own generation by the will of God:" or, as it might be rendered, that, in his generation he served the will of God; *i. e.* he served the purposes of the divine will in the generation in which he lived. Or, to follow our own rendering, that in all his services he was under the direction of the will of God; of his disposing will, placing him in his high station, and in the different capacities of a prince and prophet. We also must serve God in those stations in which his providence hath placed us; and serve God in his own way, in that station he may see fit to place us, whether it be public or private, rich or poor, short or long: we must readily comply with our own prayers, when we say, "thy will be done." Paul paid the profoundest deference to the divine will (1 Cor. xvi. 7; James iv. 15); also his commanding will. It was said of David, that "he would fulfil all God's will" (ver. 22); which is explained by keeping that which the Lord commanded. 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

II. I am to consider his happy and comfortable death. "He fell asleep." The metaphor is often used in Scripture, to signify the happy death of good men; and I think it is never applied, but to them, in this sense. It is so applied to David, Solomon, Jehosaphat, and Hezekiah, in the Old Testament; and to Lazarus and Stephen in the New. And it is thus represented, on such accounts as these,

1. With respect to the temper of their minds, or the ease and calm of spirit with which they die. Death is not terrible to a good man, who has a clear sense of his own integrity, and the favour of God. It is like shutting our eyes, and going to sleep; the putting off the body, is like pulling off our clothes, or being unclothed, and lying down in the grave; it is like stripping and going to bed. So God said to Moses, with an air of familiarity, "Go up into Mount Nebo, and die in the mount;" go take thy rest, and bid the world good-night. The reason of this is, death has lost its sting, the curse is removed, sin is pardoned, faith is in experience, and hope is lively. Death is a covenant-friend, and does them a kind office: they wait for their change with patience, and welcome it with joy.

2. As it is a cessation and rest from the toil of the foregoing life. As men rest from their ordinary labour, and forget the cares and sorrows of life, when they lay themselves down to sleep; so a good man, at death, finishes his course of service, and has "fought the good fight of faith: his warfare is accomplished." There is an end to every thing which made them uneasy here; of sickness and pain of body, and cares and grief of mind. Rev. xiv. 13; xxi. 4.

3. With respect to their being awaked and raised up at last. They are fallen asleep indeed, but they will awake again, and rise at the general resurrection. See what David says of himself, Psalm xvii. 15; and of the wicked, xlix. 14. The prophet says, "thy dead men shall live" (Isa. xxvi. 19.); and, more directly to the subject, Dan. xii. 2. Consult also Hosea xiii. 14; John xi. 11; and 1 Thess. iv. 14. They will rise with new vigour of nature, and capacities more

enlarged and improved; and then the glorified body shall be joined to its soul, and both be completely happy, and never be parted any more.

III. I am to consider the relation between these two, and shew how the one depends upon the other; *i. e.* how a life of useful service is the way to a comfortable death, and will have a blessed end.

1. It is the best evidence of our sincerity, or the truth of our grace; abundantly more so, than the most splendid profession, or the most rapturous pretensions. This was the comfort of the apostle's soul, when he had the sentence of death in himself. 2 Cor. i. 9—12.

2. It entitles us to certain promises of the covenant. For though the promises of the new covenant are gracious and free, in opposition to merit, strictly speaking, being all founded in the blood of Christ, and are all *yea*, and *amen* in him; yet they are not promiscuous and common, but limited to a qualified subject. We can only lay claim to the promise on the gracious terms of it. See Rom. ii. 7; Heb. vi. 11, 12; 2 Pet. i. 10; Rev. xxii. 14.

3. It will minister comfortable reflections to our mind at last; and, although we cannot oblige the Almighty by our best services, yet they will admit of a comfortable review, and yield powerful supports in a dying hour. (See 2 Kings xx. 3; Neh. v. 19; xiii. 22; Ps. xxvi. 1.) And what a comfortable thing must it be for a believer, to be able to say at the last, with his blessed Lord, "I have glorified thee," &c. John xvii. 4.

4. It is a good reason of our future hopes. A good man may look forward, as well as backward, with comfort and peace, in a dying hour. See the apostle's case, 2 Tim. iv. 7; also 1 Tim. iv. 18, 19.

Apply the subject in some practical remarks.

1. It reproves those who are of an opposite character, and do not serve their generation; men of a narrow, selfish spirit, who only serve themselves, and mind their own things. Or, it may be, hurt their generation, by doing harm to all about them.

2. We should be cautioned from hence, that, under a pretence of serving our generation, we do not neglect our own souls. We should begin at home, and see that our hearts are right with God.

3. Let me exhort every one to serve his generation by the will of God. Be not slothful, but fervent in spirit; do it heartily, and with all your might; give all diligence, and measure all your service by the divine will.

4. Be excited to the service of your generation, by the consideration of your death. It may be near, and there is no work in the grave, &c. Fill up the little space of uncertain time with faithful diligence, and proper duty; for death may stop you short in a full career, and cut you off in the midst of your designs. Ps. cxlvi. 4.

DILIGENCE IN DUTY NECESSARY, TO BE FOUND OF
GOD IN PEACE.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. 2 Pet. iii. 14.

THE apostle is speaking, in the preceding verses, of the drowning of the world by water, the coming of the day of the Lord, the destruction of the world by fire, and of a better state of things, in answer to the scoffers of the last days, who said, "Where is the

promise of his coming? Since the Fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were." (ver. 4.) The words are an inference, or conclusion, from these premises. "Wherefore, beloved, since ye look for such things." I shall have occasion to consider the context, in speaking to the words; what I propose is, to draw forth the sense of them in the several parts of which they consist.

I. It is here supposed that we must be judged, and that an inquiry will be made into the states of men. This is implied in the expression, "being found in him;" i. e. by him as judge, or before him, when he shall come. The apostle uses the same expression in the same sense. (Phil. iii. 9.) The term relates to the final judgment, when the great inquiry shall be made, and the states of men determined. The future judgment is particularly represented and described in Scripture; I shall give you a short view of it to engage and affect your minds.

1. The time of it is appointed. The apostle here speaks of the day of judgment, and the coming of the day of God. (chap. ii. 9; iii. 12.); The period is determinately fixed (Acts xvii. 31.); but of that day and hour knoweth no man. When the period arrives, there will not be a moment's delay; and it will come too soon, come when it will, for those who scoff at the seeming delay.

2. The judge is ordained. This our Lord himself tells us. (John v. 22. 27; and again, Rom. ii. 16; 2 Cor. v. 10.) The Saviour of sinners is to be Judge of sinners. His appearance will be very glorious, and with great magnificence and grandeur. Luke ix. 26.

3. The rule of judgment is fixed, or the measure of proceeding at that day. We are to be tried by the

gospel of Christ, and not by the law of innocence. If he were to enter into judgment with us, and to be strict to mark iniquity, no living creature could be justified, or stand before him. The whole world must be condemned at his bar, and upon the ground of rigorous justice. But we shall be judged by the gospel of Christ, and according to the gracious constitution of the new covenant; so the apostle says. (Rom. ii. 16.) The apostle James is more direct (chap. i. 25.) where he calls the gospel the law of liberty; also the perfect law of liberty. (chap. ii. 12.) And which the apostle calls the law of faith (Rom. iii. 27.) in opposition to the law of works, which accepts of true believers in Christ, or sincerity of heart, without absolute perfection, and with many imperfections. This is included in the books which shall be opened (Rev. xx. 12.); and according to which he will judge the world in righteousness.

3. The persons to be judged are the whole world or the whole race of sinful man. All who died in Adam, shall be judged by Christ, as well as made alive by him; for they are raised in order to be judged. All nations are to be gathered before him. (Matt. xxv. 32.) We are all to appear before him (2 Cor. v. 10.); the small and great, Rev. xx. 12.

5. The matter of judgment, or the cause to be tried, is expressed in the most comprehensive terms (Eccl. xii. 14.); and this is the constant language of the gospel. (2 Cor. v. 10.) So that every man shall be rewarded according to his deeds (Rom. ii. 6.); being judged according to their works. (Rev. xx. 13; xxii. 12.) God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ; the most retired transactions of their lives, and the workings of their thoughts and desires, which lie

concealed in their own breast, and fall not under the notice of others; and every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof (Matt. xii. 36.) *i. e.* every evil word, which is either false or hurtful.

6. And then there is the final issue and event of judgment; *i. e.* rewards and punishments. To the righteous it will be, "well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; and come ye blessed," &c. (Matt. xxv. 34. 41.) To the wicked it will be, "thou wicked and slothful servant; cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; and, go, ye cursed," &c. (verse 46.) The execution of the sentence will immediately follow, "for these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." They each shall go to their respective, final and unchangeable state; and so, from the consequence of it, it is called the eternal judgment. Heb. vi. 2.

II. I observe, that a Christian's great concern is to be found of his judge in peace, and without spot and blameless. Here is a double expression used, which evidently refer to two different things, of the greatest importance.

1. It refers to our justification and acceptance with God, which is the state of every true believer. There can be no peace in the day of judgment to a fallen sinner, but in the way of forgiveness. We must be pardoned and justified through the blood of Christ; for that is the measure of our present acceptance with God, which will be the rule of the final judgment; so the apostle says (Phil. iii. 9.); which is parallel to that of the apostle. (Acts xiii. 39; also Gal. ii. 16.) Thus

we are brought into a state of friendship with God for being justified by faith (Rom. v. 1.); we have peace with God.

The consequence of this is, peace of mind ; a composed frame of mind, without the uneasiness of doubt, or torment of fear, or dread of divine displeasure. A blessed serenity of mind, arising from the testimony of conscience to their own sincerity, and the witness of the Spirit to their relation to God. They have that peace of God which passes all understanding ; which none of the troubles of life, or fear of death, nor the presence of the Judge, or the terror of judgment, can disturb.

And this will appear in a peaceable frame of mind towards others : in good-will towards all men, fervent love to all the children of God. Heb. xii. 14.

I shall only farther add, that although the believer is justified already, yet we are most properly justified at the final judgment, when it will be most solemn and most complete.

2. It refers to our sanctification and holiness. This is the import of the other expression, "without spot and blameless." This may refer to our present sanctification, which is called the sanctification of the Spirit, &c. (Eph. i. 4.) For this end God has chosen believers (Phil. ii. 15.) ; and they are to keep themselves unspotted, &c. (James i. 27.) This was the character of Zachariah and Elizabeth. (Luke i. 6.) And as such Jesus Christ will present them to himself at last. (Eph. v. 27 ; also 1 Thess. iii. 13.) It is a great act of the mediation of Christ, towards his members, not only to "wash them in his own blood, but to present them pure and faultless at last." This certainly was the grand end of his whole

undertaking; (see Titus ii. 14; also 1 Peter iii. 18.) Paul represents it as the highest ambition of the Christian's heart (2 Cor. v. 9.); and the greatest blessing he could wish for others. Phil. i. 10.

III. That, in order to our being found of our Judge in peace, we must be diligent. It is a work of labour and care, and not to be done with idleness and sloth. Men may sit still, and perish; but they must be diligent who would be saved. Consider this diligence according to the Scripture account of it, in the following instances.

1. There must be the due exercise of our natural faculties and reasonable powers. Those, we readily admit, are weakened and disordered by sin; but divine assistance is promised by God, who is the God of nature, as well as grace. We are reasonable creatures, when we are not holy creatures, and can act as men, when we cannot act as saints; and in order to being such, see Deut. xxxii. 29; Isa. xlv. 8; Hos. v. 4; 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Phil. ii. 12.

2. The improvement of the talents and enjoyments of life. Every man has his proper talents, besides his natural powers, though in different degrees, for which he must account at last. (Matt. xxv. 14; Luke xix. 13.) Such are life and health, acquired knowledge and experience, liberty and opportunity, possessions and prosperity, interest and credit in the world. Those who improve therein shall be commended (Matt. xxv. 21.); and those who do not improve them shall be punished, (ver. 26.) We are only stewards of our talents (Luke xvi. 2.); and our Lord advises a proper use of them (ver. 9.); also the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

3. We must perform the proper duties of our place and station. (John ix. 4.) In this sense our Lord pro-

nounces his servants blessed (Matt. xxiv. 46.); and this the apostle recommends. (2 Peter i. 10.) Faithfulness in the way of duty is a good preparation for the coming of the Lord. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

4. There must be watchfulness against sin. So our Lord directs his disciples in this case (Luke xxi. 34); in this view he often requires watchfulness. (Matt. xxvi. 41, 42; Mark xiii. 37.) The apostle abounds with exhortations to sobriety and watchfulness. (1 Thess. v. 6, 8; 1 Pet. iv. 7; Heb. xii. 15, 17.) And the Judge is represented saying, "Behold I come, blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." Rev. xvi. 15.

5. The use of appointed means, or institutions of worship. These are properly means of grace. Thus we must be found in the daily practice of prayer. (Luke xviii. 1; also xxi. 36.) We must converse with the word of God (Heb. ii. 1; 2 Peter i. 19.); and the apostle says, that "God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." or come to him in any way of worship or service. Particularly the Lord's Supper is a perpetual memorial, not only of the death, but of the coming of Christ. (1 Cor. xi. 26.) Thus, by frequent converses with God in the ordinances of his worship, and receiving communications from him, we are formed to a more spiritual frame, and serious habit of mind, and in a nearer fitness for the coming of the Lord. Hereupon,

6. There must be the exercise and improvement of suitable graces, or proper dispositions of mind. (2 Peter i. 5; iii. 18.) Particularly faith (Heb. vi. 1.); also hope (Heb. vi. 11; 1 Peter i. 13.); and looking (Titus ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28; Jude 21.); and in this chapter, verse 12.

IV. I shall consider the motives and reasons of this

diligence, here suggested and referred to. This is intimated in the words of connexion, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things; i. e. the things which he had been speaking of, or the arguments of his foregoing discourse. The great ideas in his mind at that time were,

1. The destruction of the present world (ver. 7), to be accomplished by a deluge of fire; also (ver. 10) the whole globe of the earth shall be set on fire, and whatever belongs to it, and has been infected with sin. All the works of nature and of art, the stately buildings and proud palaces, the monuments of vanity, ambition, and curiosity, which have endured for many ages, and stood the longest injuries of time; all the grandeur and glory of this world, the pageantry and shew of it, will be then destroyed and consumed to ashes, and there will be no remainder or ruins of them left; "for the heavens shall pass away." &c. verse 10.

There will be a universal conflagration; heaven and earth will be all on fire at once, and make one burning vault, one funeral pile: it will be the funeral of the world. What will be the terror of the affrighted inhabitants! no place of refuge! Yea, the fire which will consume the world, will destroy the wicked. (ver. 7.) Now, how forcible is the reason? Be diligent to be found of him in peace, when the great day of his wrath shall come.

2. The expectation of a better state: (ver. 13.) He represents it as the common expectation of Christians, grounded on the promise of God; "we, according to his promise, look for it, a new heaven and a new earth." (Isa. lxv. 17.) Heaven and earth will be alike, at least for a limited time, and become a glo-

rious state, in which only righteousness and righteous persons shall dwell. And the expectation of such a state of things should operate as a powerful motive, that we may not come short of the glory of God, but be fit to partake of it, and share in all the blessedness of it. Let us, therefore, according to our Lord's direction, "watch and pray, that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And, in the words of the apostle, "Give diligence, so an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom; and, let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

CONSOLATIONS IN THE DEATH OF GOOD MEN,
IN THE MIDST OF THEIR DAYS.

He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days: I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days, thy years are throughout all generations.—Psalm cii. 23, 24.

WHAT the Psalmist here apprehends for himself, is sometimes actually the case with other good men; "He weakens their strength in the way, and takes them away in the midst of their days." Nothing is more affecting to considerate minds, and more dark and unaccountable, in Providence, than when eminently good and useful persons are removed in early life, while wicked and useless persons are spared to old age. It carries something strange in its appearance, and is contrary to nature. That old persons

die worn out with service, and decays of nature, is no wonder, and a less loss to the world; that is agreeable to the course of nature, and what every one expects. But when younger persons are cut off in the midst of their days, and the height of their usefulness, richly furnished, and ripe for service, like blossoms nipped in the tender bud, which promised much fair fruit, when one dies, &c. (Job xxii. 23.) this naturally strikes the mind with surprise and astonishment; and we are apt not only to grieve at the loss, but to be shocked at the appearance, and puzzled at the dispensation, and to say with the Psalmist, on a like occasion, "the day of his youth," &c. (Psalm lxxxix. 45. 47.) I propose,

I. To inquire into the reasons of this dispensation, and consider what account can be given of it.

1. There is the sovereignty of the divine will. God is the Creator of the world, and the natural Lord of his own creation. He is an absolute Sovereign, and he is only fit to exercise such a power, who is infinitely perfect, and can never mistake or use it ill. We have nothing to fear from one who acts under the conduct of infinite wisdom and goodness in all his ways.

His sovereignty and dominion extend to all his creatures in heaven and earth. Angels move at his command, and do his will. It extends to all the circumstances of life; our birth, abode, relations, and conditions of life. (Acts xvii. 26.) Yea, it reaches to life itself. (Ps. xxxi. 15.) The different periods of our time in the world, and of our departure out of it. (Job xiv. 5.) He claims it as a prerogative of Deity. (Deut. xxxii. 29.) He has the keys of hell and death; and

this is always a reason for silence and satisfaction. 1 Sam. iii. 18 ; Job i. 20.

And his dominion is uncontrollable, as well as absolute. (Job ix. 12.) Nor is he accountable to his creatures for his proceedings. (Job. xxxiii. 13.) But the will of God is always reasonable, and we may, without presumption, assign other reasons of this conduct, though we cannot pretend to take in all his views, or dive to the bottom of his designs ; and therefore,

2. It is a point of wisdom. We are born mortal, and under sentence of death. (Rom. v. 12.) We have the seeds of mortality in our nature ; and tend to dissolution, though no accident should befall us ; and we are under the sentence of the violated law, and liable to the execution of it every moment, from our birth, to our dissolution. It must be executed some time or other. But now the time and season of it is not settled by the divine law. It is left to the divine pleasure, and is a point of wisdom, at what period, and in what circumstances of life it shall take place, whether in youth or in old age. And it is highly reasonable to suppose, that the only wise God shall remove us from the world when he thinks fittest and best ; and which, if we knew all circumstances, we ourselves would highly approve.

3. It is a display of his all-sufficiency ; to shew that he can do without the best instruments, or raise up others in their place. When the Lord is pleased to take away an active, useful person out of the world, we are apt to despond in such a case, and to tremble for the interest of religion in a particular family, or place. But we often find it otherwise. He sometimes removes eminent instruments of public good, to make room for others to stand up in their place ; and

some, by such providences, have been drawn out of obscurity, and have been eminently useful in the church of the world. Thus God raised up Joshua upon the death of Moses; and great as Moses was, Joshua was honoured to do that which Moses was not worthy of; and young Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit, when he was taken up from him. The residue of the spirit is with the Lord, and he can furnish and spirit others for his service, according to his will and pleasure.

4. It is in great mercy to themselves. It is a great kindness to them, though it is a grief and loss to us. Thus, for example; he sometimes removes them from the evil of the world, and impending calamities coming upon it (Isa. xlvii. 1.); or, they may be taken from the snares of life, and the temptations of sin, which might be too hard for them, and endanger their being entangled and overcome (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21; iii. 17.); "and when they were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, fall away." (Heb. vi. 4.) In wise compassion to their infirmity, and tender concern for their safety, he takes them away in the midst of their days; and that they may not be tired above what they are able, sometimes makes this way of escape out of it.

Besides, it is a great instance of divine mercy, that he takes them the sooner to heaven, and gives them their reward betimes. They are not only the sooner out of danger, but the sooner happy; and, we may add, that God will accept the purposes of their heart, as to any farther work they intended to do for him. 1 Kings viii. 18.

5. It may be considered as an act of justice, and as the punishment of sin. God may remove useful

persons out of the world for their own sin. He may see fit to contend with them for former miscarriages, by cutting their life short, though their souls are accepted and saved, particularly for disobedience to parents: see the fifth commandment, which promises long life to obedience, and implies a premature death for the contrary. See the case of the Israelites, Ps. xcix. 8; Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx.

Or else, they may be removed for the sins of others. God may take them away for our over indulgence, and too great opinion and expectations from them, we may kill them with our kindness, by provoking the Lord to jealousy when we put them in his place.

Or else it may be, on the other hand, when they are neglected and slighted. God sometimes punishes the ungrateful world, by removing early eminent persons, whom they did not know how to value or treat with kindness. And of them it might be said, "Of whom the world was not worthy."

6. It is for the good of others, and to exercise the graces and virtues of those who survive. It is one of the greatest trials of life, to part with beloved relations and friends out of this world, especially in their younger years of life. The design of such dispensations, is to try and exercise our graces; and to excite our diligence in every service of God and duty of life. What so proper, as the thoughts of death, to inspire our sluggish souls with life and vigour, and make us fervent in spirit, and zealous in good works; to keep up a lively sense of religion in the world, and a constant care to please God.

7. To be a standing monument of human frailty, and give warning to all about them. It is a home-in-stance to younger Christians, and younger ministers,

when any of such eminence and worth are taken away ; and they being dead, speak to us who survive, prepare to follow ; be ye also ready. And to be sure, elder persons are concerned to take the warning, for if younger than we die before us, to be sure we must quickly follow.

8. Perhaps it may be considered as an instance of our conformity to Christ. As the servant must not be above the Lord, and we must not expect kinder usage from the world than he met with, so we must not wonder if we are suffered to stay no longer in it, than he did. He had a short ministry of three years and a life of thirty-three.

Perhaps they have done a great deal of work in a short time, as he did. And although no man can say, as the man Christ Jesus did, "it is finished;" I have done all the work I designed to do for God before I die; yet they may have filled up a short life with great service, and run over a great compass of ground in their short race. Perhaps they have begun a good work, and left impressions on the minds of many, which others must bring to perfection.

9. It is to make heaven more desirable to us, and raise our hearts more powerfully thither. Every good man lost out of this world, is gained to the other, and heaven is the richer for the death of every saint. How many Christian friends have got the start of us and gone to heaven before us. One would be tempted to envy their felicity. Should not this make heaven more familiar to us, more agreeable to our thoughts, that so many are called thither, who once dwelt in flesh, and were dear to us, and high in our esteem?

And though God is the chief good, the centre of

blessedness, and rest of souls, and that is the greatest reason and motive of our choice and love of heaven; yet the Divine Being is vastly above our thoughts, and our best conceptions of him are very imperfect. (Job xxxvi. 26.) But the consideration of the glorified Redeemer in our nature, and of our fellow Christians there, is a more sensible thing, and a great relief to our thoughts, and is both more within our reach, and more apt to impress and affect our minds.

II. Let me direct you to the proper improvement of the subject, that it may be useful to ourselves.

1. We should reverence and adore the divine sovereignty and wisdom, and say, O the depths, &c. (Rom. ix. 33.) And what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. John xiii. 7.

2. Let us look more to God, and live more entirely upon him. Eye the living God more, and the creatures less. Place more dependance upon God, and less on men. There we shall never be disappointed; here we cannot fail of being so.

3. Let us comfort ourselves in their loss by the consideration of the mercy it is to them. How much more safe and happy are they in heaven than they would be on earth! It is well with them, however it is with us. We should therefore rejoice at their preferment: so our Lord said to his sorrowful disciples. John xiv. 28.

4. Yet we should be humbled under a sense of their loss, and lament it as a great affliction. Though we must not weep for them, yet we ought to weep ourselves; as it is a loss to us, and the world about us. And when this is done in a qualified degree, with submission to the will of God, we may very properly lament their loss. Jesus wept for Lazarus, the

elders of Ephesus for Paul, that they should see his face no more. (Acts xv. 28.) And we may sorrow, only not as those who have no hope. 1 Thess. iv. 13.

5. It should teach us to value useful men while they live, and make the best use of them we can. Labour to be better for them, and get some good by them, while you have them. John the Baptist was a burning and a shining light (John v. 35.); in his ministry and conversation; and the people rejoiced in it for a season; for he died young too.

6. The reasonableness of early religion, and being in good earnest about it: and here let me caution you against dangerous delays, and reckoning upon long life, and neglecting present duty. How natural is this in youth and health! And let the consideration of dying young be a powerful restraint from youthful vanities and vice. Early piety will make you wise, secure and happy. And let me particularly recommend it to young persons to think of their baptismal covenant, and of solemnly renewing it at the Lord's table.

7. What reason of thankfulness for longer life and opportunity! It is certainly a great mercy in itself and in the intention of God; for the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation. (2 Peter iii. 15.) Let us not alter the nature of it by continued neglects and disobedience, and turn it into a greater aggravation of sin.

8. Let us all be mindful of our own mortality, and quickened to daily preparation. Do something every day for eternity, that you may be found in a safe state, and prepared frame of mind; and that in whatsoever hour of the night, or age of life, our Lord shall come, we may not be surprised, unprepared; but be found ready and watching, and waiting, and looking for his appearance.

THE NATURE AND MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.—Ps. xxxiv. 7.

THIS psalm is supposed to have been penned by David when he changed his behaviour before Achish, the king of Gath, called in the title of this psalm, Abimelech, this being a common name for all the kings of the Philistines; as Pharaoh was common to the kings of Egypt; and as Cæsar was common to the Roman emperors. The history of David's situation is recorded. (1 Sam. xxi. 10.) The means of his deliverance is particularly noticed, in the text and context. He prayed to his God. (ver. 4—6.) His friends also prayed for him. (ver. 5.) And the angels of God encamped round about him. The angel, or angels of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, &c. Such is the love of God to his children, that he appoints many angels, on particular occasions, no less than a host, enough to form an encampment, to save his servants. I shall,

I. Offer a few remarks relative to those beings who tend the righteous, and,

1. They are real beings, not imaginary beings, or apparitions only. This was the error of the Sadducees. (Acts xxiii. 8.) But the Scripture declares them to have a personal subsistence. Hence they are said to be sent forth. (Heb. i. 14.) They are spirits that speak. (Acts x. 19.) They are living creatures (Ezek. i. 5.); by which are meant angels, as they are called cherubims. (Ezek. x. 16.) And they are called authorities and powers. (1 Pet. iii. 22.) And as such possessing

understanding and will; and they do such things as none but reasonable agents can do. They admire God's wisdom. (Eph. iii. 10.) They converse with each other; and excite each other to glorify God. Isa. vi. 3.

2. They are secondary beings. Some heathen philosophers supposed the angels to be co-eternal with God; but this cannot be. There can be but one first, one eternal Being. This is God's prerogative. (Hab. i. 12.) God created them. (Col. i. 15.) In one of the six days, during which all things were created. (Exod. xx. 11.) For before the seventh day, the heavens and all the hosts thereof, were created. (Gen. ii. 1, 2.) The stars are the hosts of that heaven which we behold; but the angels are the hosts of the third heaven, which to us on earth is invisible; they are so called. (Neh. ix. 6.) They were created before the earth; therefore before the third day of the week, for on that day the earth was created, when the sons of God shouted for joy. (Job xxxviii. 7.) In the Septuagint, it is all the angels. It is probable they were created, with the light, on the first day of the week, hence called morning stars, not only stars, in respect to their brightness and glory, but morning stars, as being formed in the morning, the very beginning of creation.

3. They are most excellent and glorious creatures. Man is the most excellent creature upon earth; but inferior to angels even in his best estate. (Ps. viii. 5.) Solomon calls them higher than the greatest tyrants that oppress the earth. (Eccl. v. 8.) Of all creatures, they most resemble God. They resemble God in being spiritual beings, not clothed with flesh and blood as we are. They are immortal beings, and what they

now are, they shall ever be. They are wise and knowing, as it respects nature and the affairs of the world. (Dan. x. 13.) And their natural knowledge is increased by the experience of near six thousand years. They also possess a great deal of revealed knowledge concerning the Scriptures. (Dan. x. 21.) Also concerning individuals before they are born. (Dan. xi. 6.) Hence they are said to be full of eyes. (Rev. iv. 6.) Eyes behind, knowing what is past, and eyes before, knowing what is to come. They are holy beings, called holy ones. (Dan. iv. 17.) Holy angels. (Matt. xxv. 31.) Angels of light. (2 Cor. xi. 14.) All these things shew that the angels, of all other creatures, most resemble God.

4. They are very numerous. They are called a great company. (Ps. lxxviii. 11.) There are thousands of them. (ver. 17.) The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; nay, there are millions of them. (Dan. vii. 5—10; Rev. v. 11.) Nay, they are innumerable. (Heb. xii. 22.) Bildad asks, is there any number of his armies? (Job xxv. 3.) Christ tells Peter that he could call to his assistance twelve legions (a legion is 6,666) of angels, which was equal to the amount of the whole Roman army. God can spare multitudes of angels to the assistance of his servants.

5. They are very powerful. They excel in strength. (Ps. ciii. 20.) They are called mighty angels. (2 Thess. i. 7.) One angel is able to destroy all the men in the world. Their great power is manifest by what they have done. Iron gates cannot stand before them. (Acts xii. 10.) An angel can make the earth shake (Matt. xxviii. 2.); and occasion a most terrible destruction in a short time, as in the case of the first-

born in Egypt: the army of Senacherib: Sodom and Gomorrah, &c.

6. They are orderly. Hence called a host, or an army. It is certain that some, in their employment and office, are superior to others. There are some who are captains and leaders of others, who follow them. The text says, the angel of the Lord encampeth, &c. One angel cannot make a camp; but many can, under the conduct of one, as doubtless was the case here. One particular angel announced the birth of Christ. (Luke ii. 9.) And a multitude under his conduct, praised God upon the occasion. (ver. 13.) The Scriptures speak not only of angels, but also of archangels: these are styled chief princes. (Dan. x. 18.) We have the names of one or two. One is named Michael (Dan. xii. 1; Jude 9; 1 Thess. iv. 16.); who seems to be the chief of all the angels and archangels of God, and who by a way of eminence is called the archangel, and the great prince. (Dan. xii. 1.) They are supposed to be seven in number, signified by the seven lamps in the temple, before the mercy seat. (Zech. iv. 10.) Hence John speaks of the seven spirits of God, &c. (Rev. v. 6.) Who are called seven angels. (Rev. viii. 2.) These seem to be the general inspectors of the whole world, and thence are said to be sent forth into all the earth.

7. They are all at God's disposal. Hence called the angels of the Lord, angels of God, and spirits of God: they are sometimes called the spirits of the Lord. (1 Kings xviii. 12; Acts viii. 39.) He is their great head and leader, and is hence called, the Lord of Hosts. They stand in his presence. (Luke i. 19.) And do his pleasure. Ps. ciii. 20.

II. Consider who are the objects of their attention and care.

1. The world in general. Many great men have been wonderfully protected and delivered by the angels of God, out of respect to the church and people. This was the case with Darius, the Persian emperor (Dan. xi. 1); also Alexander the Great; and neither of them feared God; but they were God's instruments to accomplish his designs in the world, and as such, protected and delivered by angels.

Great mercies and judgments are dispersed by them. They are as a lamp to the righteous, to light and direct them; and as coals of fire to the wicked, to punish and consume them. David expected they would punish his enemies. (Ps. xxxv. 5, 6.) Sodom was destroyed by them. (Gen. xix. 13.) Seventy thousand Israelites fell by the plague, which was brought upon them by an angel. (2 Sam. xxiv. 16.) When Jerusalem was to be destroyed, the angels forsook it, and a voice was heard saying, let us go hence. And Tacitus reports that in Jerusalem there was a voice heard, greater than human, saying the gods are departing from this place. The trumpets in the Revelation, signifying judgments on the Roman empire, were sounded by angels; and the vials, denoting judgments on the papal power, are poured out by angels, because these things are effected by their ministry.

In times of war, wonderful victories are obtained by their invisible agency. They occasioned the sound in the mulberry trees, through which David obtained the victory. (2 Sam. v. 24. See also, 2 Kings vii 6.) The angels fought against the king of Persia. (Dan. xi. 20.) No wonder that the inconsiderable number

of Grecians routed and destroyed the Persian army, which consisted of several millions, when the angels fought against them.

The great revolutions which happen in the world are effected by their ministry ; when the living creatures went, then the wheels went with them. The world moved as the angels of God moved. They deposed Nebuchadnezzar, and gave his crown to another. (Dan. iv. 17.) When Belshazzar was slain, Babylon taken, &c. it was by their agency. An angel wrote the hand-writing on the wall, intimating to the king and his nobles the fate which awaited them. When Darius got the empire, an angel assisted him to keep it. (Dan. xi. 1.) The great revolution which took place in the world at the conversion of Constantine the Great, was brought about by angels. (Rev. xii. 7.) Thus we see, that this visible world is by God's appointment governed by the invisible world.

2. The church of God. This might be signified by the cherubims on the curtains belonging to the tabernacle. (Exod. xxvi. 1.) Also by the cherubims on the walls of the temple. They promote the salvation of the church. (Heb. i. 14.) An angel directed Peter to Cornelius and his family. (Acts x. 30.) Paul and others were directed by an angel to preach in Macedonia. (Acts xvi. 9.) When Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrians, it is said the angel of the Lord went out, and smote the camp of the Assyrians. (1 Kings xix. 35.) From which it appears, that an angel did reside in, and preside over that city, where the temple was, who upon this occasion went out of it. So then, as one observes, angels are the guard of the queen of heaven, the Lamb's wife.

3. Individuals, who fear God ; such are the objects

of their particular and special care. They preserve them from many evils, which otherwise would befall them. (Ps. xci. 11, 12.) They journey with them and protect them. (Gen. xxviii. 12; xxxii. 1, 2.) Paul experienced this. (Acts xxvii. 23, 24.) An angel appeared for Israel against Balaam. (Numb. xxii. 32.) And for Elisha against the king of Syria. 2 Kings vi. 17,

They convey positive blessings, by assisting God's servants in their undertakings; as in the case of Darius already mentioned, although he did not fear God; and in the case of Abraham's servant for the good of his family, (Gen. xxiv. 40.) Also, by instructing them, as in the case of Dan, ix. 22; and Zech. i. 9. And the shepherds (Luke ii. 10); and Mary (John xx. 12); and Elijah (2 Kings i. 15); and Hagar, (Gen. xvi. 9.) An angel smote Zechariah for his unbelief. (Luke i. 20.) And doubtless, they visit God's children with diseases, to correct them for some sin they have been guilty of.

They have a great influence upon the minds of men. Evil angels can suggest evil thoughts into the mind; see the case of Judas. (John xiii. 2.) Also Ahab. (1 Kings xxii. 22.) So also good angels influence the minds of good men: and although all good thoughts are originally from God, yet he makes use of the ministry of angels for this purpose.

They stood by good men in their afflictions, to strengthen and comfort them. It was so with our Lord, in his temptation (Matt. iv. 11); and in his agony (Luke xxii. 43.); also, Isaiah vi. 7; and with many of the martyrs, in the days of popery; the angels standing by them, and quenching the violence of the fire.

Angels appear in due time to deliver them. See the case of Lot and his family. (Gen. xix. 16.) Also, Daniel vi. 22; and Peter (Acts xii. 11); and the apostles. Acts v. 19.

They do not forsake good men at death, but carry them to heaven: it was so with Elijah (2 Kings ii. 11); and Lazarus. (Luke xvi. 22.) The souls of good men pass through the devil's territory, the air, but they are safe under the convoy of angels.

They will collect all the righteous together at the great day, in order to a happy meeting with their Lord. Matt. xxiv. 31; xiii. 41.

They will also associate, and join with the redeemed of the Lord, in celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb for ever and ever. Rev. vii. 9—12.

III. What is necessary on our part that we may enjoy the benefit of their protection.

1. We must endeavour after an interest in Christ; for all the angels are at his command. It is through his mediation that we obtain the benefit of their ministry. (John i. 51.) If we are Christ's, all things are ours, even the angels of God.

2. We must be careful to walk in the fear of the Lord; for his angels encamp about such, says our text; this was Cornelius's character; and while he was praying, an angel came to him. (Acts x. 2, 3.) Also of Daniel, who was favoured in the same way. (Dan. ix. 20, 21.) See how those who feared God were preserved. Ezek. ix. 4—6.

3. Let us imitate the angels, in doing all the good we can, in every station or relation; both to the world and the church. We should strive to do the will of God on earth, as the angels do in heaven.

4. Let us remember that the eyes of angels are

upon us; they witness all our actions. (Eccl. v. 6.) They are present at our assemblies. (1 Cor. xi. 10.) Let us remember these things, and act accordingly, and we shall soon associate with them in the walks of the paradise of God. Zech. iii. 7.

THE DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.
 Luke xii. 35.

THIS charge was given by our blessed Saviour, who knew the importance of our duty, the dangers and difficulties that would attend us in our Christian warfare, and the shortness and uncertainty of the time that would be afforded for the performance of it. He gave it to his disciples to prepare them for their duties and sufferings; but it is not peculiar to them, but lays an indispensable obligation upon Christians of all ages. He commanded us to have our loins girded about, in allusion to the manner of dress worn by persons that are sent upon any extraordinary business, that requires immediate execution; for they are wont to gird their garments closely about them, that they may not, by loosely flowing, hinder dispatch, and entangle them on their journey: and he commanded us to have our lights burning, because we are not aware how soon the night will come upon us, or in what hour of the night our Lord will call us. And we shall effectually answer his gracious design, if,

I. We are always ready to do our duty. So short

is the space of this mortal life, so near are we to the point of our departure, even at our entrance into it, that we ought to embrace every opportunity of performing our necessary work, as if it were the last we should ever enjoy. It should be done in the same manner as the Jews eat the passover. *Exod. xii. 11.*

The service that is required of us is of such mighty concernment, that we cannot make too much haste to execute it, or be too apprehensive of the danger of delay. It must be discharged immediately, like the commission that was given to one of the children of the prophets. *2 Kings ix. 1—3.*

Our Saviour has represented our condition as a state of war; and every faithful soldier and servant of Christ must be disposed to do his duty, and when his conscience tells him this is expected from him, he must presently devote himself to it, and put forth all his strength, without repining, without reluctance, and without delay.

To this end he should keep himself disengaged from the things of this world, and never suffer his affections to cleave to them; for if they cleave to us, instead of running in the ways of God's commandments, with delight and cheerfulness, we shall be pressed down with the clog that hangs upon us. How wretchedly did this draw back the ruler that was not far from the kingdom of heaven. *Luke xviii. 22, 23.*

To convince us that no pretence can justify our preferring any thing before our duty, we have two very remarkable instances set before us in the gospel. (*Luke ix. 59—62.*) What pretences could be more specious than these to go and bury his father, and to bid farewell to his nearest relations, and most affectionate friends? and yet these were not sufficient.

We ought rather to imitate the example of Abraham. (Gen. xii. 1.) And of the holy apostles who arose and followed the blessed Jesus, as soon as he said unto them, follow me. Matt. ix. 9.

And indeed if we consider, either the Master we are obliged to serve, or the nature of our service, or the inestimable rewards which he has promised, to quicken and encourage us, we cannot but rejoice to do his will, and make it our chief desire, our earnest study, our constant endeavour to please him.

He has shewn his friendship to us, by all the testimonies of affection, by every expression of friendship; and if we have any sense of these obligations, our heart must leap for joy, at every opportunity of acknowledging his kindness.

And the duty which he has enjoined us, is such as would naturally recommend it to us, had we no regard to the person that enjoined it; for it improves and adorns our nature, is agreeable to that distinguishing faculty, our reason, and keeps that glorious lamp burning in its full brightness: and by teaching us to act like men here, it will make us wise as the angels of God hereafter; and resemble, in the future state, that glorious ambassador of the Most High, that came down to the prophet Daniel, who was clothed in fine linen, and whose loins were girded with fine gold. Dan. x. 5.

And the mention of our reward seems to render all other arguments needless, to persuade us to our duty; for one would think it impossible to doubt or delay, though it were but for a moment, when an eternity of perfect happiness is the end of our labours. What a mighty encouragement did Joshua give to the host of Israel. (Josh. i. 11.) But how much greater en-

couragement have we, since, after a few fleeting years spent in this vale of sorrow, we are assured we shall enter into the heavenly Canaan, into eternal rest, and uninterrupted peace ! Shall we not then answer our Saviour, as the sons of Reuben did Joshua ? (ver. 16.) If we are always ready to do our duty, we shall,

II. Stand upon our guard against the devices of our adversary ; and in this again our duty resembles that of the soldier ; and our condition, like his, requires timely care and caution ; and God in his infinite wisdom and goodness, has given us proper faculties for it. Our reason is capable of discerning the excellence of our duty ; and the advantages that certainly attend it ; and the heinousness of sin, and the dreadful effects that flow from it. Conscience, if we suffer it to exercise its authority, will not fail to admonish us friendly, and give us faithful intelligence of the circumstance of our state : this under God is our keeper and defence. (Psalm cxxi. 5.) And this our guardian that keepeth us will neither slumber nor sleep, unless we weaken it by repeated injuries, and are resolved to cover it with the grossest darkness.

The subtlety of the tempter renders all our vigilance necessary. He is too well acquainted with the weakness of our nature ; the easy passes by which he may gain access to our heart : he is never regardless of the proper season we are most likely to be wrought upon. And we have a party within, prone to second his endeavours, and dispose us to a compliance with him. When our thoughts are wrapt up in imaginary peace, presumptuous security, or wandering abroad and gone from their appointed post, our treacherous affections open the gates, and let in a multitude of adversaries, and we cannot too strictly inquire, to whom we give admission.

But, alas! we are void of care, and as much addicted to pleasure, as if there were no danger, and when it overtakes us, our whole provision is then to be made, our whole business is then to be done. But while we endeavour to rally our scattered forces together, and to recollect our impartial thoughts and just resolutions, in the time of confusion, we are entirely conquered, and fall a prey to the enemy whom we disdained to fear.

Among the number of sinners that are unhappily seduced from their duty, there are hardly any that can offer a better excuse, than this childish one—they did not think of it. All that they can say of the loss of their innocence is no more than the corrupted soldiers said of the body of Jesus, they came by night and stole it away while we slept. Matt. xxviii. 13.

That we may not for ever be deluded, we must prepare ourselves for the artful devices that will be formed against us, and the sudden assaults that will be made upon us. And since we are liable to them every moment, we must live as if every moment were the critical point, the article of danger; and if the accursed spirit should always find us ready to resist him, he would desist from his fruitless endeavours: for if we resist him, he will flee from us. James iv. 7. and,

III. We must live in the daily exercise and practice of virtue. And in this also the military discipline is a proper pattern for our imitation; for the raw, inexperienced soldier, is constantly trained for the day of battle; and when he is called upon to engage the enemy, he receives the charge as if he was accustomed to fight, and has no occasion to say, as David did of the weapons and armour of Saul, I can-

not go with these, for I have not proved them. (1 Sam. xvii. 39.) Thus must it be with us. Like the wise virgins, we must take oil with us that our lamps may have a fresh supply. But too many Christians, after their first profession, conduct themselves as if they had applied the prophecy of Elijah to themselves, and imagined that their cruise of oil should never fail. 1 Kings xvii. 14.

But, alas! if we suffer ourselves to grow supine and careless in our duty, our most shining virtues will contract rust and blemishes, and the less they are used, the more unfit for use will they grow.

And unless we go forward in the paths of virtue, it is too much to be feared we shall go back; for the same idle dispensation which inclines us to stay, will lay us open to the devices of our adversary.

Surely a reasonable creature that has any regard to his own honour and interest, would wish to be found by his Saviour doing those things which he hath commanded him to do; and which recommended him to the approbation of himself, of his holy angels, and even of God, through the merits of Christ! We should often inquire, should I choose, in my present condition, to be summoned to appear before my Judge? I fear, we can seldom return a satisfactory answer to such a question as this.

And in the common circumstances of our life, we are so far from being prepared for our great change, that we are hardly fit to leave our temporal affairs with decency, much less to launch forth into eternity: and were it only uncertain what our portion would be in the future state, one might conclude it very difficult to bear the doubtful prospect.

How then can we rest, as we very often do, even

under a certainty of being exposed to the worst of misery? Were judgment to overtake us, it would find us, as unexpected destruction did the children of Job. (i. 18, 19.) Or rather it would surprise us with all our sins about us, as the hand-writing upon the wall did the impious Belshazzar. (Dan. v. 3—5.) What horror and confusion must seize the mighty Pharaoh, when there was a great cry made at midnight, that the Lord had smote all the first-born in Egypt. (Ex. xii. 29, 30.) But how much greater horror and confusion must fill the guilty soul, that falls asleep in the midst of sinful pleasures, and awakes in endless torments.

And how happy is the man that makes his duty his first care, and effectually resolves never to leave it undone! Besides the satisfaction that flows from his innocence, he has the truest enjoyments even of the ordinary pleasures which God has allowed him in this life. He has no ill-boding fears to strike a damp upon him, but a joyful assurance that he has made the necessary preparation for the life to come; and the blessings of Providence which he enjoys, remind him of those which are infinitely better.

Whereas the man who has neglected the one thing needful, is often interrupted in his beloved pleasures, with the unwelcome apprehension of future torments.

But on the other hand, he that is provided for eternal life, is also secured against the evil day, and all the calamities of the present world. For he is supported with a well-grounded peace and assurance, having a certain hope of an abundant recompense. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Thus the soldier that not only discharges the duties

of his calling, but is constantly mindful of a nobler warfare. He is pleased with the hopes of victory, and the glory of a triumph. And if it should be his lot to die in the field, he is persuaded that he shall then overcome his last enemy, and the trumpet shall no more call him forth to the hazards of an uncertain fight, but to receive the everlasting fruits of an ever-glorious victory; then shall he say with Paul, I have fought the good fight, &c. 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

Let us therefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, &c. (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.) Since our Christian course is also compared to a race, let us so run for the prize that we may obtain. (1 Cor. ix. 24.) And since our future happiness is represented as a marriage-feast, let us take care to put on the wedding-garment, and let our loins be girded about, and our lights burning, and we ourselves like men that wait for their Lord.

THE ADVANTAGE OF AN EARLY ACQUAINTANCE
WITH THE SCRIPTURES.

And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, &c.—2 Tim. iii. 15.

IN the character of Timothy is exhibited to our view, a most striking and amiable example of early piety and the power of godliness. He had received the benefit of early instruction, and a good example. From the dawn of reason, he had been trained up in the knowledge and practice of religion, by his mother and grandmother, who, being persons of eminent piety themselves, would not fail to instil

into his young and tender mind the instructions of truth, and to implore the blessing of God to render them effectual. So much may be inferred from the words of Paul to this excellent person. 2 Tim. i. 5.

I propose by divine assistance,

I. To exhibit to your view the vast importance and advantage of a sound and just knowledge of the Scriptures, especially when acquired in early life.

And let it be remembered that by true scriptural knowledge, I mean not a speculative knowledge only, but that also, which is the effect of divine illumination, spiritual, practical, and saying: for both these kinds of knowledge are included in the text; adorned the character of Timothy, and are connected with the character of every real Christian. But more particularly,

1. The importance of a true knowledge of the Scriptures will appear, if we consider, that they communicate information of the most important nature; information, relating to the nature of God, his attributes; the trinity of persons in the divine essence; the awful state and condition of fallen man, guilty, depraved, and subject to the curse of the law; the boundless love of God to fallen man, in the gift of his Son, to redeem a guilty world by his sufferings and death; the gift of the Spirit to enlighten and regenerate our fallen nature; the evil and desert of sin; a future judgment, &c. &c.

2. The knowledge of these things could only be obtained by a divine revelation. Pious and learned men have communicated wonderful things to the world, both by preaching and writing; but whence had they their knowledge, but from the pure source of

unadulterated truth, the Scriptures? To this source, many of our modern philosophers and infidel writers owe much of their light about morality and natural religion, though they have neither the honour nor the honesty to acknowledge it. What could the light of nature have done for us with respect to the truths above stated, and others equally important, which are connected with them? Let the heathen world, destitute of divine revelation, determine the question.

3. The knowledge of the Scriptures lead to the best and noblest improvements of the faculties of our souls, and to the most refined and permanent enjoyments. Divine revelation is the noblest of all systems when impartially considered by the rational mind, even in a speculative point of view. But to a mind savingly alluminated by the Holy Spirit, its sacred contents appear with a superlative glory and beauty, and fall with such weight and influence upon the heart as to call forth its warmest desires and affections. (Ps. lxxiii. 25; cxi. cxix. cxlv.) And to such a one, new sources of joy and satisfaction unfold themselves from every part of divine revelation; from the perfections of God; the doctrines and promises of the gospel; from the mediatorial glory of Christ; the fulness treasured up in him; communion with God; and from the great, refreshing, and animating prospects of glory and felicity beyond the grave, which the gospel sets before him. There these promises shall have their ultimate accomplishment. Isa. lx. 20. xxxv. 10.

4. Before I close this head of doctrine, let me observe, that all the above arguments for the beneficial consequences of acquiring religious knowledge, re-

ceive additional strength when applied to the young and rising generation. The time of childhood and youth is allowed, by universal consent, to be the best period of human life for receiving instruction. This holds good in all the sciences, and in none more so, than in the science of religion, which infinitely excels all others. The mind is then sprightly and vigorous, docile, and susceptible of instruction: the memory is fresh and retentive. The mind is free from worldly cares and entanglements; from a multitude of prejudices and misconceptions, which greatly obstruct the communication of knowledge in a more advanced life. Such a choice opportunity should not be neglected, but improved with the greatest avidity, by all those who are engaged in the instruction of the rising generation, especially in numerous Sunday-schools lately established in these kingdoms. And should this be the case, through the divine blessing, the advantages arising to the church and the world, will be incalculable. Prov. xxii. 6.

II. I shall now shew, how the Holy Scriptures are made effectual to salvation; "able," says the text, "to make wise unto salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus."

1. They are sufficient to make wise unto salvation, as they discover the method of salvation, and the means whereby it may be obtained. That God should place his love upon offending man; give his Son to die for him; that the blessings of salvation should be treasured up in Christ; that the Spirit of Christ should be given to apply those blessings; that various ordinances should be appointed; that prophets, apostles, and evangelists should be sent; and an ordinary standing ministry should be appoint-

ed, for expounding the doctrines and promises of salvation, and for inculcating all the duties of piety and holiness upon the children of men; that all these exceed the investigation of reason, must be evident to every considerate mind. But they are clearly revealed in the Scriptures of truth, which contain a perfect rule, both of faith and practice.

2. To render this revelation of God's will effectual for man's salvation, the Holy Spirit, in his powerful agency, must concur with it. The great truths therein contained must be impressed upon the heart, and felt in their energetic and sanctifying influence, which is beyond the power of human exertion and endeavour. Appointed means are to be used, but the divine blessing is necessary to give them their proper efficacy upon the heart and life. (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) This divine agency accompanying the truths of God, quickens the dead souls of men, implants faith, and every other Christian grace.

Faith is an eminent Christian grace, and fruit of the Spirit. It is the production of the divine operation on the heart, it interests the sinner in Christ, as his Saviour, in God as his reconciled Father, in the fulness of Christ, in all the great and precious promises. It is the great recipient of every blessing; and Christ himself is the great, immediate, and principal object of it. It is inseparably connected with salvation, and is an eminent part of it, while unbelief leaves sinners under guilt and condemnation, and subject to the miseries of eternal death. Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18.

3. Faith in Christ, is not merely an assent of the understanding to the doctrines of Scripture, although it implies it. Faith, indeed, implies the assent of the

understanding, not however in its natural state ; but as it is illumined by the Spirit of God. (2 Cor. iv. 6.) By this light the mind perceives the spiritual beauty and glory of Christ, and his suitableness as a Saviour, and this produces a spiritual conviction and belief of what is revealed concerning him, accompanied with cordial approbation of him, and of the whole method of grace, together with a humble dependance on him, for full and free salvation. It is sometimes called a trusting in the Lord : like wisdom it is a tree of life to him that layeth hold of it, and blessed is every one who retaineth it.

4. The Holy Scriptures make men wise unto salvation, as they are the proper object, food, and nourishment of faith, whereby it is invigorated, and rendered productive of all its precious fruit. Faith cannot be exercised without keeping in view objects congenial to its nature and exertions. Such are the great truths of revealed religion : faith realizes these great objects. It recognises the perfections of God, and looks for every advantage from them. It trusts in his power for protection ; in his love for the effects of infinite benevolence ; in his wisdom for understanding and counsel ; in his goodness for a supply of our wants ; in his mercy for the remission of sin ; in his compassion for sympathy in afflictions and temptations ; in his faithfulness for the accomplishment of his promises. When it looks at sin, it sees it exceeding sinful. When it turns to the covenant of grace, it sees it well ordered in all things and sure. When it beholds Christ as a Redeemer, it sees a free and full salvation ; clothing for the naked, riches for the poor, &c. When it contemplates the divine promises, it brings them home by a believing application of them to the soul.

When it views Jehovah as the Governor of all the world, it is persuaded that every mysterious providence shall be overruled for the good of the church. (Rom. viii. 28.) When it looks at the divine law, it approves it as supremely excellent. When it contemplates the glory to be revealed, it fills the heart with the most triumphant joy. Rom. viii. 18.

Improvement.

1. Let us form the most honourable sentiments of the Holy Scriptures. Let us read and examine them, let us cherish and love them : let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; let us live by faith in Christ Jesus, upon the doctrines and promises of the gospel, and upon the perfections of God, as they shine in the word of truth, in the person and mediation of Christ. Let us adorn our profession by a tender and close walking with God. O ! that it may never be our condemnation that light has come into the world, &c. John iii. 19.

2. If we have shared in the invaluable blessings of the gospel ourselves, and made a full proficiency in knowledge, faith, and holiness ; how solicitous should we be that others, and especially the rising generation, should share the same inestimable blessings of salvation ! This should be the concern of ministers, of parents, and other teachers, and indeed of all Christians, in their various stations of life, with a view to this grand end ; too much encouragement cannot be given to Sunday-schools, which are professedly designed for the instruction of youth. As to those unhappy men who may oppose such benevolent institutions, they deserve our pity.

3. Let us consider, that by living in faith and holi-

ness ourselves, and by endeavouring to train up the rising generation in the same way, we shall, in the best and most effectual manner, oppose the fatal and pernicious growth of infidelity, error, and immorality; as we are strictly bound by divine authority, to do all in our power for promoting the glory of God, the interest of truth, and the good of mankind, during the short period of human life. Let us, in an humble dependance on divine grace, rouse ourselves to a holy and vigorous activity in the prosecution of these important objects. With incessant and earnest care, let us instil into the minds of the young, the knowledge of God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as the best way to transmit the truth in purity and power, to generations yet unborn, that so God may have a seed to serve him while sun and moon endure.

THE CHARACTER AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?—Matt. xxi. 10.

WHEN any person of a singular character, and who is represented as having done some remarkable works, makes his appearance in any age or country, he usually engages the attention of mankind. If he has achieved some great thing for the good of the human race, or of his country, he readily becomes an object of admiration, and receives the applause of the multitude; many of whom perhaps will afterward, from various considerations, commence his enemies, and persecute him with a hatred and rancour, equal, if not superior, to

their former admiration and applause : so variable are the tempers of men, and of so little importance are their professed admiration and regard. This was evidently the character and behaviour of that multitude, who followed our Saviour in his progress to Jerusalem. And when he was come into Jerusalem, &c. It is intended by divine assistance,

I. to suggest several answers to this question, put by the people of Jerusalem, concerning Jesus Christ.

1. Who is this ? He is the glorious Personage who was typified and promised to the church as the true Messiah, and the Saviour of sinners. He is the great antitype of all the typical persons, places, and things, appointed to prefigure him, under the Old Testament. He was promised as the woman's seed. (Gen. iii. 15.) As Abraham's. (Gen. xii. 3.) In the character of Shiloh. (Gen. xlix. 10.) In his prophetic character he was foretold by Moses. (Deut. xviii. 15.) He was to be of the family of David. (Jer. xxiii. 5.) He was to be born of a virgin. (Isa. vii. 15.) Bethlehem was foretold as the place of his birth. (Micah v. 2.) It was foretold that he was to perform wonderful works. (Isa. xlii. 7 ; xxxv. 5, 6.) Had the Jewish nation paid proper attention to these things, they would not have rejected Christ, but hailed him as the true Messiah.

2. Who is this ? He is a person of infinite dignity, the only begotten and eternal Son of God. (John i. 14—18 ; iii. 16.) He is the Son of God, as begotten by the Spirit of God. (Luke i. 35.) As being raised immediately from the dead by God. (Acts xiii. 33.) It is so said of others, much more so of Christ. (Luke xx. 36.) In his resurrection he was declared to be such : and as being made heir of all things in his Fa-

ther's house. (Heb. i. 4, 5.) But more especially, he is the only begotten Son of God by nature, of the same essence with his Father, the eternal Son of God, who, when he became incarnate, came forth from the Father (John xvi. 27, 28.); who was before Abraham. (John viii. 58.) Who preached to the antediluvians. (1 Pet. iii. 18—20.) Who made the world. (John i. 3; Col. i. 14—18.) And is God. (Heb. iii. 4.) God manifest in the flesh. (1 Tim. iii. 16.) Possessing all the perfections of God, is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

3. Who is this? He is the only mediator between God and man. (1 Tim. ii. 5.) Man in his primitive innocence, required no mediator; but when man sinned, a mediator was essentially necessary, to interpose between an offended God, and offending sinners. No angel was equal to the arduous undertaking; the Son of God, alone, was found equal to the work; hence the Father, in his infinite wisdom and love, appointed him to the service. Ps. lxxxix. 19.

4. Who is this? He is Head of the church by the Father's appointment. (Ps. ii. 6; Luke i. 32, 33; Eph. i. 22, 23.) He is her head, as it respects representation, being the second Adam, the first being the figure of him who was to come. Of government, as her King and Lawgiver, the Scriptures being the great standing statute-book of his kingdom; which none must add to or diminish, at the peril of his salvation. Of saving influence, and the fountain of spiritual life to all her members. And of example, 1 Peter ii. 21.

5. Who is this? He is that glorious Personage to whom the whole administrations of divine providence are committed. He is the Governor of the world,

The Father has put all things under his care and management. He moves and directs the whole frame of nature, he directs the motions and propensities of his creatures, so as to render them subservient to his will. He appoints and conducts all the changes and revolutions of empires, raises some, and depresses others. He sits invisible at the helm of the great providential dispensations, and tremendous scenes of Providence which appear in our own day, and will bring glory to his name, good to his church, and destruction to his enemies out of them all. We may exclaim here, with Paul, on another occasion, "O! the depth," &c. Rom. xi. 33.

6. Who is this? He is the dignified and glorious Person, who is appointed by Jehovah the Father, to be the Judge of the world, and to pass the decisive and unalterable sentence, which will fix the conditions of all mankind through eternity. (John v. 22; Acts xvii. 31; Rom. xiv. 10; Rev. xx. 12.) Jesus will then appear in circumstances of awful and tremendous majesty. The whole race of mankind will be assembled at his tribunal, from hoary Adam to his youngest son. He will possess a perfect knowledge of all the characters and causes which will come before him, whether good or bad, and the final sentence will proceed accordingly. O! what a dreadful day will that be to the wicked, and how terrible their sentence! (Matt. xxv. 41.) But what an auspicious and joyful day to the righteous! They will lift up their hands with joy, to bear their gracious welcome to the Lord. Matt. xxv. 34.

7. Who is this? It is he who is appointed to be the blessed medium through which the happiness of the redeemed will come into their possession to eternity.

In the state of primitive innocence, all blessings flowed immediately from God, in the channel of absolute love and goodness ; but this channel of communication was shut up by sin ; and after the introduction of moral evil, Jehovah could hold no gracious intercourse with man, but through a mediator. It is in this way, and in this only, that all the blessings of grace and glory can be obtained by them who believe. Of this David says, this is all my salvation, and all my desire. And Paul says to believers, ye are complete in him ; for, in him all fulness dwells ; and, my God shall supply all your wants, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. And the burden of the song of the redeemed will be, unto him that loved us, &c. Rev. i. 5, 6.

The improvement.

1. How great and wonderful are the love and wisdom of God displayed in the scheme of redemption ! Hence it is called, “ the wisdom of God in a mystery ; and, the manifold wisdom of God.”

2. How inexcusable are all those who reject the Redeemer, and despise the great salvation set before them in the word of God ; and the preaching of the glorious gospel ! Such, particularly, are all infidels, who reject the gospel revelation ; all worldly professors, who love their farms and merchandise above God, and the word of truth. Matt. vii. 21.

3. Let Christians daily implore the Redeemer by faith in his mediatorial character and offices. Believe on him, trust in him, depend upon him, as made of God unto them wisdom, &c. 1 Cor. i. 30.

4. Dwell much on the glorious excellency of Christ, and on the work he has performed, and will still perform, for you, and for his whole church. In your se-

rious contemplations, often put the question to yourselves, "Who is this?" and study to consult suitable answers, according to the information already given. This is he, "who is the eternal Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me," &c. &c.

5. Amidst the present convulsions of the nations, console your minds with the reflection, that Jesus is the Governor of the nations; and that he will order all things for the good of his church; and he, himself, "will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst."

6. In an age like the present, when error, infidelity, and every vice abound, let me direct you, O believer, to stand fast in the faith and holiness of the gospel. "Contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Live down all reproaches and aspersions cast upon your character, or religion, by the most exemplary purity and godliness: "For this is the will of God your Saviour, that by well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE TO SEE GOD'S
GLORY.

And he said, I beseech thee shew me thy glory.

Exod. xxxiii. 18.

THESE are the words of Moses, a man singularly favoured of God, by the manifestation of himself he

made to him ; and still desiring to be more so, here expresses that desire in prayer to him. Perhaps he might desire too much ; more than he in his present state could bear ; and so far his request was denied. (ver. 22.) The request that Moses here makes, as duly regulated, is graciously answered. (ver. 19.) By his goodness, is there meant his glory ; as the LXX render it, "I will pass before thee with my glory ;" thou shalt have a transient view of it, but the full discovery is reserved for a future state : and how this matter was to be conducted, see in verses 21, &c. Doubtless, a great deal of God, and his goodness, is to be seen and known upon earth ; but far, very far short of what will be enjoyed in heaven ; and the more of his goodness we experience here, the more insatiable is our desire after more.

By divine assistance, I shall consider,

I. What is meant by God's glory, which the Christian desires to see.

1. It is glory, in his gracious conduct to sinners, in and through his Son. Any other discovery of God would be dreadful and terrifying, and instead of desiring it, he would deprecate it. "God is a consuming fire," and, as such, inaccessible without Christ. (1 Tim. vi. 16.) But Jesus has revealed him in the most amiable and endearing manner (John i. 18.) ; in this way his glorious goodness is abundant. (Ex. xxxiv. 6.) It is in his wounds that we are secured from flaming wrath. Through him it is, that the glory of God shines, not with a destroying, but reviving light ; and only as standing within this rock, we are able with comfort to behold it.

2. It is his glory, as manifested to his soul in pardoning mercy and love. It is pleasing to the Christian,

to see the glory of God's goodness, in reconciling the world to himself by the death of his Son (2 Cor. v. 19.); but much more satisfactory for him to see the glory of God, as revealed to his own soul, so as to be able to say with Paul, "In whom we have redemption," &c. (Eph. i. 7.) This is his abundant goodness, as expressed chap. xxiv. 7. It is called the secret of the Lord. Job xxix. 4; Prov. iii. 32.

3. It is his glory, as manifested to the soul, making him a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Pet. i. 4.) Improving and increasing (2 Cor. iii. 18.); this is called the mind of Christ (Phil. ii. 5.); and the Spirit of Christ. (Rom. viii. 9.) It is called the beauty of the saints (Ps. xlv. 11.); and it is that salvation with which God beautifies the meek (Ps. cxlix. 4.); and by which they are prepared to see his glory in heaven. Matt. v. 9.

II. Where does the real Christian wish to see the glory of God.

1. In all his ordinances in this world, especially in the assembly of his saints. There God has promised to be. (Ex. xx. 24.) There he gives the most glorious communications of himself; and after these the Psalmist expresses the most vehement desire. (Ps. xlii. 1, 2.) He there alludes to the assemblies of his people, as he explains it. (Ps. xxvii. 4.; and again, Ps. lxiii. 1, 2.) How much of the glory of his perfections are seen in his sanctuary? particularly in prayer and praise, when the hearts of his saints are warmed, enlarged, and raised to himself, while he supplies them with fresh strength, life, and comfort. And when his word is read, opened, and applied, what impressions are made? what effects are produced? How much of his glory has been displayed in this way?

But the glory of God, in his perfections, eminently shines in the ordinance of the Lord's supper ; where Jesus Christ is eminently set forth as crucified before our eyes, suffering, bleeding, and dying, in our room and stead.

2. Much of God's glory is here to be seen. The glory of his wisdom, in devising the wonderful scheme of man's redemption, so as the seeming contrary pleas of his attributes might be adjusted, sin punished, the law magnified and made honourable, and yet the rebel pardoned. And when none else could, God himself found a ransom, appointing his own Son, in our nature, by dying, to become our Saviour ; " Wherein," &c. (Eph. i. 8.) And seeing this, in the commemoration of his death, believers have been made to cry out, " O ! the depth," &c. Rom. ii. 33.

3. How glorious is the discovery here made of his justice and holiness, in the satisfaction made for sin by the voluntary death even of God's own beloved Son to make way for sinners being pardoned and saved. And, considering who he was, and what he bare, and how he was treated, that we might be spared ; the ruin of the offending angels, the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, and the punishment of sinners in hell for ever, do not altogether shew forth the justice and holiness of God, like the sufferings and death of Christ, on the account of lost sinners.

4. Here divine grace is to be seen in its brightest lustre. In its freeness, without our merit, and against the highest provocation. In its condescension, in resolving to save us, however unworthy. In its sovereignty, passing by angels, and providing a Saviour for

man. In its riches, as extending to all mankind. John iii. 16.

5. Here is displayed the glory of God's faithfulness to his promises ; in his being present in his ordinances, giving his people fresh light, strength, and comfort ; and thus, in a sensible way, renewing his covenant with them, and assuring them, that all the blessings of it are theirs.

6. The Christian desires to see the glory of God above. (Phil. i. 23 ; 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.) The glory of the Lord sometimes fills his house, and his ordinances here below, which believers are admitted to see to their comfort and joy ; but this is only preparatory to the inconceivably greater displays that will be made in heaven, which they expect, and earnestly desire. 1 John iii. 2 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

III. Why does the Christian desire to see his glory ?

He desires to see it in his ordinances here,

1. Because the glory of God is transforming. The more he sees God in the manner described, the more he shall be like him. Some rays, as it were, were left upon him ; and the disciples were so much raised above themselves, that it was remarked, " they have been with Jesus." Acts iv. 13.

2. The glory of God, thus shewn to the Christian, is most reviving. Not any thing in this world can give that comfort to the soul, which the manifestation of God can do. Ps. iv. 7.

And the Christian wishes to see this glory in heaven,

1. Because it will be most clear and full. The manifestations which God will make of himself above, if communicated here, would dissolve our present frame :

we could not see his face and live. Here, "his loving kindness is better than life." What then will it be when manifested in heaven?

2. The glory to be revealed above, will be most satisfying. It is called a fulness of joy, and pleasures for ever (Ps. xvi. 11.); and this David speaks of, as what he desired above every other thing. Ps. xvii. 15.

3. The manifestations of this glory in heaven, will be permanent and everlasting. The glory of God will be eternally open, and the saints shall eternally behold it, and that with the highest delight, without interruption, and without end.

Lastly, let us pray for it. And thus express our desires after it, for desire is the very life and soul of prayer: and those desires should be expressed to God who alone can shew us his glory. And those desires should be expressed, especially in the assemblies of the saints, and with uncommon vehemence of desire, saying, "O Lord, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And thus we shall express the high value we put upon it, and may reasonably expect a favourable answer. And to our prayers for clear manifestations of his glory, let us add our praises for those which we have already received; and thus begin the work of heaven while we are upon earth, in the hope of dwelling with God in heaven, to behold his glory for ever.

CHRIST'S DYING REQUEST FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world,
&c.—John xvii. 15.

IN this chapter, we have the heavenly prayer of our Lord, put up a little before his ascension into heaven. The design of it is to support and comfort his disciples, whom he should leave behind. (Ver. 13.) Though he was going to enter upon his last and greatest sufferings, he graciously provides for their peace and joy. He knew that they valued nothing more than his presence with them : he perceived their rising grief, and saw the standing tears in their eyes, at the heavy news of his departure from them ; and he knew that where he was going, they could not presently follow him, but must stay a considerable time behind, in a wicked world ; wherefore, to calm and allay their sorrows, he leaves them many reviving cordials ; among which, this in the text is a very suitable and comprehensive one, “ I pray not,” &c.

I shall endeavour, by divine aid, to shew,

I. From what evil believers shall be kept.

1. This preservation does not extend to an absolute freedom from pain and affliction. Sin, the moral evil, let in a flood of natural evil upon the world. Good men have their share of it (Heb. xii. 6.) ; and it is designed to profit them. Ver. 16.

2. Nor does it exclude all suffering for the sake of righteousness. This was foretold by Christ (John xvi. 33.) ; and the reason is given, chap. xv. 19.

3. Nor is it to be understood as a full discharge

from Satan's temptations. Their Christian armour will be necessary through life; see the reason of it. (Eph. vi. 12.) And some who have been dear to God, have been particularly tried in this way. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

4. Nor is it to be understood of being kept from death. Believers are under the same law of mortality with other men (Gen. iii. 19.); which law is ratified (Heb. ix. 27.); after the promise of the Messiah given. (Gen. iii. 15.) Therefore it was not the design of Christ's death, nor of his prayer in the text, to procure a deliverance from it.

But if saints are to die as well as others, some may inquire, how it comes to pass that they are not immediately, upon their conversion, taken to heaven. The reasons may be as follows:

1. God orders it thus for his own glory. His dominion over us, and propriety in us, and right to rule us, is thus made known. He will have a people in the world to worship, adore, praise, honour, and adhere to him. What a wretched world would it be, if there were none of this description in it!

2. By ordering it thus, he endears Jesus Christ to them, by teaching them, from a sense of their wants, &c. to value and esteem his merits and intercession; and thus he brings them to "honour the Son, as they honour the Father."

3. He continues them in the world, that they may be instrumental in saving souls, by bringing poor sinners to himself. And how content should they be to stay on earth for a season, that they may help to people heaven.

4. They are to have a time in which to run the race set before them, and be conformed to the example of

Christ, and follow him in the same way he went to glory. Thus runs the promise, "To him that overcometh." &c. Rev. iii. 21.

5. Hereby God will try the sincerity and strength of their graces. Of their faith and trust in him, and of their devotedness and love to him.

6. In this way he excites their desires after heaven. And this will abundantly sweeten it to them, that after a sorrowful life, and painful death, they enter into the possession of it.

7. The saints' rest is sure, though for a time it be deferred. They are set to work in the vineyard only till evening; see what he says of them, v. 24.

8. Should the time of their stay on earth be longer, if they continue faithful and diligent, their glory will be the greater: and the everlasting rest will be a full recompense for all their former labour and suffering.

But what evil shall believers be kept from?

1. From all damning error and delusion. David's confusion holds good as to every saint. (Ps. xvi. 11.) They have the unction of the Holy One for this end (1 John ii. 20.); and to this end was the Spirit promised. John xvi. 13.

2. They shall be kept from the tyranny of Satan; though not from his temptations, yet from his tyranny, (John viii. 36.) They shall be kept from temptations superior to their strength, or have more strength given them, answerable to their trials. 1 Cor. x. 13.

3. They shall be kept from sinking under the burden of their afflictions. Isa. xliii. 1, 2.

4. They shall be kept from the dominion of sin. Rom. viii. 2. 6—14.

5. They shall be kept from the curse and condem-

nation of the law ; being in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation to them. Rom. viii. 1.

6. They shall be kept from the fear of death ; and, finally, obtain a glorious victory over him. 1 Cor. xv. 55, &c.

II. What assurance there is, from the prayer of our Lord, that believers shall be thus kept. A variety of considerations may confirm our faith herein, as,

1. That of the person praying. Our great High Priest, the Son of God, Saviour of men, perfectly holy ; in whom the Father is always well pleased ; whom he always hears.

2. What he asks for, and on what ground ?

His request is for the preservation of his people, in order to their eternal happiness ; which is perfectly agreeable to the will of God, and the end for which he was sent by him into the world.. (John vi. 39.) Besides, he asks for no more than by his meritorious sufferings he hath the fullest right to, which shall never be denied him.

3. The persons to whom his request is directed.

The God of all grace, full of compassion, and who, as an instance of it, spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ; and how shall he not with him also for his sake, and at his desire, freely give us all things ?

4. The persons for whom he intercedes. His children who have a special interest in him, and bear a peculiar love to him.

I shall now apply the subject ; and,

1. Hence learn the greatness and constancy of Christ's love to his people, and his desire of their eternal blessedness with himself. This is the affection with which he lived and died, and which he carried

to heaven with him that he might continually appear in the presence of God for us.

2. What a powerful argument should it be with all to come to Christ. Who would live a day in the world, without having an interest in this prayer of his, of being kept from the evil?

3. It may strengthen the faith of real Christians, in their daily prayers for deliverance from evil, that it is the same request their Lord has made for them.

4. How much is the world mistaken, as to Christ's servants, as if they were the most miserable persons in it; when the Lord hath so fully provided for their safety and happiness, both in this world, and in that which is to come.

5. How inexcusable must it be to forsake Christ and his service, for fear of suffering! He that would save his life, by running from the Lord of life, takes the direct way to lose it.

Lastly, Let this encourage us cheerfully to follow the Captain of our salvation, whilst we live, and to commit our souls to him when we die. Having God on our side, to keep us from evil, if we belong to Christ, what need we fear what man can do unto us? He that cannot trust God, cannot trust any thing. Whatever discouragements you meet with, hold on your way; in his hands you are safe. Whenever you are inclined to faint, remember, greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world; and then expect the glorious conclusion, according to 2 Tim. iv. 18.

**GOD'S DARK DISPENSATIONS TO HIS
SAINTS.**

And Jacob their father said unto them, &c.

Gen. xlii. 36.

THESE are the words of Jacob, in great perplexity and distress; the occasion of which we are acquainted with in the foregoing verses of this chapter. He concluded Joseph to be dead, and looked upon Simeon as lost; in both which he was mistaken: and the thoughts of parting with Benjamin cut him to the heart, as if it were to send him to the grave: and therefore he cries out, "All these things are against me." But Joseph was safe in honour, Benjamin would be so too, and well received; Simeon would be set at liberty, all the family would be kindly entertained, and the father sent for to be nourished by his beloved son; and thus all was making for his comfort and advantage, that appeared so black and dismal, and from whence he expected nothing but ruin. And, as Jacob's is not a singular case, I shall endeavour,

I. To shew God's dealings with his people, even when he is working their deliverance, and designs their good, are often dark and intricate.

1. This was the case with Jacob. God designed the preservation of him and his family in Egypt, by Joseph's advancement there; but how unlikely the means he made use of in order to it, and yet how wonderfully was the end proposed, accomplished.

2. Thus it was with the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, four hundred and thirty years after. They

were exceedingly oppressed by Pharaoh; see the complaints of the people to Moses and Aaron (Ex. v. 21.); and the complaint of Moses before the Lord, on the same occasion (ver. 22, 23.); and after they were brought a little on their way out of Egypt, their danger was increased. (chap. xiv. 8, 9.) The pursuing army was behind, the sea before, on either hand mountains, that forbid their flight or escape; to all appearance, every thing was working towards their destruction; and yet this was the way that God took to accomplish their deliverance, by opening the sea to give them passage, and drowning their enemies, who ventured to follow them. Ver. 26—28.

3. Thus it was with Daniel, and the three Hebrew worthies. God resolved to deliver and save them; but the way in which he chose to do it, was by suffering the first to be cast into the lions' den, and the others into the fiery furnace, and yet by keeping them unhurt, to the confusion of their enemies.

4. David was designed for a throne, and anointed to it: but, before he reached it, he was driven from place to place, as a partridge upon the mountains; and reduced to that distress, that he seemed to conclude his case desperate, and his destruction certain. 1 Sam. xxvii. 1.

5. Such also were God's dealings with Job: he resolves to bless Job's latter end more than his beginning, but how unlikely a way to this, to be stripped of all, and reduced to the deepest distress; to be plundered by his enemies, censured by his friends, Satan let loose in the sorest manner to afflict him, and God writing bitter things against him. Who could have thought, that saw him in his low condition, that the issue would have been so bright and blessed.

Thus God's dealings with his servants have often a sad aspect, as if he was set on their destruction ; when he is consulting their truest advantage, and promoting their salvation. Verily he is a God that hideth himself, when he is at the same time the God of Israel, the Saviour. Wraps himself in clouds and darkness, before he shines through to their comfort. But this leads me to consider,

II. Whence it is that a child of God may be ready to conclude that to be against him, which is really for him.

1. This proceeds from their weakness of faith, as to God's wisdom and power, faithfulness and love. We are slow of heart to believe, that he is able to bring good out of evil, and light out of darkness ; that he hath hidden designs to serve by all his dealings with his servants, which he knows how to bring about, and will not fail to do in the appointed way and time, which are always to be left to him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

2. By looking to Providence, and losing sight of the promise. Rom. viii. 28.

3. Judging by sense. When afflicted and pained, we are apt to feel and complain, that "all these things are against us;" but faith speaks in a very different language. Ps. lxxiii. 1.

4. By looking down to the present world, and our interest in it. When this is chiefly regarded, that which tends to lessen our comforts in it may be thought to make against us ; but that which is contrary to our temporal welfare, may promote our everlasting happiness.

5. Through rashness ; viewing only a part of his work, and not waiting for the issue. Jacob, who cried

out so passionately, "all these things are against me," in the end discovered his mistake.

6. Through not attending to the usual method of God's dealing with his people, and our own, and others' experience of the happy purposes he has served by it. He makes rich, by first making poor: he heals by wounding, and making them sick: he quickens in the way to heaven, and better prepares them for it, by all the sufferings of the present life. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

III. The grounds upon which we may conclude that what the Christian apprehends to be against him, shall in the end terminate in his favour.

1. From God's relation to him: God is his Father (Rom. viii. 15.); and is particularly concerned for his good and happiness, even in affliction and distress. Heb. xii. 10.

2. From God's love to him. See his language to his people (Isa. xliii. 4.); and this love will engage all his perfections for them.

3. From his express promises. (Rom. viii. 28.) Things shall have a better issue than they expected. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, and there be safe from fear of evil. Isa. xl. 1, 2.

IV. Why is it that the Lord chooses this way to promote the best interests of his followers.

That he really does so, is clear from Jacob's case; and what we sometimes think to be a judgment, is a mercy. The fish that swallowed Jonah, was a mean to bring him to shore. This way the Lord chooses,

1. For his own glory, as appears from the case of Lazarus. John xi. 4.

2. To discover their corruption, and to try their graces. Deut. viii. 2.

3. To quicken, and make them more earnest in prayer. The more dark his dispensations are, the more fervent and enlarged we should be in prayer.

4. To sweeten and endear the mercy he grants them, after all their fears and doubting to the contrary.

5. To heighten their thanksgiving for the mercy bestowed. How thankful must Jacob have been, after all his difficulties, to find his children all alive and well. How was the thanksgiving of Israel enlarged, upon their deliverance from danger at the Red Sea! It produced the song, Ex. xv.

Application.

1. Let us be anxiously careful to assure ourselves, as to our special relation to God, as his children in covenant with him, devoted to his service.

2. Let us be aware of judging God's purposes of grace by the external dispensations which make way to bring them into effect. The promise is often just about to be fulfilled, when, to an eye of sense, it seems at the greatest distance. In the evening-time, when least expected, it shall be light. Wherefore,

3. Beg that faith may not fail, when surrounding circumstances seem dark and dismal. In every place he can come to us, and in the deepest distress he can relieve us. Isa. xli. 10.

4. Beware of entertaining narrow thoughts of God in the deepest distress. Believe him always the same whatever changes you meet with.

Lastly, While you are apt to say on earth, "all these things are against me;" press on with greater earnestness to heaven. There all your tears shall be wiped away; and there you shall have "fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore."

THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIUMPH IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith, &c.*—2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

THESE are the words of St. Paul concerning himself, while he was a prisoner at Rome, and when his mind was impressed with the idea of an approaching martyrdom for the sake of Christ: but his pious and great mind was fully prepared to meet it. (Verse 6.) In this very awful situation, he reflects upon the past circumstances of his life, and takes a survey of the future. The words of the text are the result of the inquiry: "I have fought a good fight," &c. We shall consider,

1. He had fought a good fight. The Christian's life is represented as a military life. 1 Tim. vi. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 3.

His enemies are numerous and powerful. (Eph. vi. 12.) Watchfulness is essentially necessary (Matt. xxvi. 41; 1 Cor. xvi. 13.); the heart must be watched (Prov. iv. 23.); the world, with its pernicious smiles and snares, and opposition (John xv. 18—20.); our invisible adversary, called in Scripture, a roaring lion (1 Peter v. 8); a great red dragon (Rev. xii. 3.); a serpent (Rev. xii. 9.); the devil, or accuser. 1 Peter v. 8.

The Christian must look to his Leader and Captain. (Heb. ii. 10.) He has already conquered them (Col. ii. 15.); and will make the Christian more than a conqueror. Rom. viii. 37.

A sufficiency of armour is provided for the Christian warrior. It is described by St. Paul (2 Cor. x.

4, 5; Eph. vi. 14—18.); and recommends the putting it on. Ver. 11. 13.

This armour must be used to the last. (1 Kings xx. 11.) In which case the victory is certain (Heb. xi. 34.), and the reward sure. Rev. ii. 10.

The apostle calls this conflict, "a good fight."

It is in the cause of a good God, good to all. Ps. cxlv. 9.

It is in the cause of truth and holiness.

It is a conflict maintained against the enemies of our Lord, and his kingdom.

And is in order to an everlasting good; eternal life. 1 Tim. vi. 12.

2. He had finished his course.

The Christian's life is here compared to a race.

Reference is here had to the Olympic games.

Also in 1 Cor. ix. 25.

In this race every man may run. Heb. ii. 9.

Not only one may obtain the prize, but all.

The prize is not a corruptible, but an incorruptible crown. 1 Cor. ix. 25.

All who run faithfully are sure of the prize. Ver. 26.

The danger of turning back is great. Ver. 27.

The course for the Christian racer, is the path of holy obedience (Ps. cxix. 59.); which was holy David's delight. Ver. 14. 24.

The apostle's conduct is worthy of imitation. Phil. iii. 14.

The conduct of the foolish Galatians should be a warning to others. Gal. v. 7.

3. He had kept the faith.

The apostle may refer to the doctrines of faith, in general; but that of the atonement made for sin, by the blood of Christ, particularly.

This is the only foundation of a sinner's hope.
2 Cor. iii. 11.

In this St. Paul glories. Gal. vi. 14.

It was the great subject of his preaching. 1-Cor.
ii. 2.

Those who lay the foundation, and build upon it
doctrines inimical to the Scriptures, shall be saved
with great difficulty. 1 Cor. iii. 12—15.

Those who neglect or reject it, their damnation is
sure. Heb. ii. 3; x. 26.

He may also allude to the doctrine of justification
by faith.

We are justified by works before men. James ii. 24.

And shall be justified in the same way at the day
of judgment. Matt. xii. 37.

But can only be justified by faith alone in the hour
of conversion. Rom. iii. 20. 28; Acts xiii. 38, 39.

Or, he may refer to the grace of faith.

It is a divine principle in the soul, and is called the
gift of God, it being the effect of God's operation on
the soul. Eph. ii. 8.

And is a gracious habit; a continual exercise in
those who live a life of righteousness. Gal. ii. 20.

It ascertains the reality of spiritual and eternal
things. Heb. ii. 1.

It unites the soul to Jesus Christ, its grand object.
Eph. iii. 17.

St. Stephen was a man full of faith, and of the Holy
Ghost. Acts vi. 5.

Those who possess it can perform wonders. Heb.
xi. 33, 34.

It is attended with the evidence of our interest in
Christ, and peculiar relation to God, as his children.
1 John v. 10.

This faith the apostle had received, and faithfully kept to the last: "I have kept the faith."

His conduct, in this particular, forms a grand contrast to the conduct of the unhappy persons mentioned, 1 Tim. i. 19.

Consider,

II. The views and expectations of the apostle relative to a future state.

1. He expected to receive a crown in the eternal world; called, in Scripture, a crown of life. James i. 12.

A crown of glory, that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. v. 4.

It is promised to those who are faithful unto death. Rev. ii. 10.

Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. Rev. xix. 16.

He has many crowns upon his own head. Rev. xix. 12.

And many crowns to bestow upon his followers, who shall shine with him in glory. Matt. xiii. 43.

And he shall make them kings and priests unto God and his Father, for ever. Rev. i. 6.

2. This crown is here called a crown of righteousness.

It was procured for man by the spotless, righteous sacrifice of Christ. Heb. ix. 12.

It will be given only to those who are righteous in the sight of God; who are justified and sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus. Heb. xiii. 12.

It will be given as the reward of righteousness. (Matt. x. 41.) Called a great reward (Matt. v. 12); and the Christian shall not lose it. Mark ix. 41.

And it will be given as an act of righteousness on the part of God the Father. He will thereby evince

and declare his faithfulness to his Son, who laid down his life to purchase this crown, and unto the faithful followers of Christ, unto whom it is promised : he is truth itself, and cannot lie.

3. This crown is laid up for the Christian.

While in this world he is an heir to it. Rom. viii. 17.

The full enjoyment of it is reserved in heaven for him. 1 Pet. i. 4.

He has frequent earnestings of it. Eph. i. 14.

4. The Christian expects to receive this crown from the Lord, as his righteous Judge.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. Acts x. 36.

He shall judge both quick and dead. Ver. 42.

It is so appointed, to secure to him his proper revenue of glory. John v. 22.

St. Paul looked forward to that period with the highest exultation, and expected to receive the crown from his righteous Judge, as one, who, in a gospel sense, was worthy of it. Rev. iii. 4.

5. He expected to receive the crown at that day.

The day of his death; when the Christian goes to paradise (Luke xxiii. 43.), and is present with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 8.

The day of judgment; when the full reward shall be given, and eternal glory be the inheritance of the Christian, in soul and body. Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

6. The apostle exults at the prospect, not only of receiving a crown of glory himself; but anticipates, with the most exalted pleasure, the numberless crowns which shall be given to all those who love his appearing.

The Christian spirit is not a selfish spirit: he rejoices in the prosperity of others.

He knows that in his Father's house there are many mansions. John xiv. 2.

And that he can supply the wants of all to all eternity. Rev. vii. 17.

Improvement.

1. How awful is the state of those who are of a different character, and whose conduct is the reverse of that which we have been describing. They are not fighting "the good fight of faith;" but fighting against God, against Christ, against the influences of the Spirit, against the kind offices of good angels, the good wishes of good men, against their own mercies, against their own souls.

Nor are they finishing their course in the way to heaven; but are running quite away from it. (Rom. iii. 17.) In the way that leads to eternal destruction. Ver. 16; Isa. lix. 7, 8.

Nor have they kept the faith, but are altogether destitute of it (2 Thess. iii. 2.); and are even opposed to it. Ps. xiv. 1.

2. Their prospects, as to a future state, are by no means cheering and consolatory; but gloomy, dark, and dismal.

They can expect no crown of righteousness, but eternal misery. Ps. ix. 17.

Sentence will be pronounced, and the punishment inflicted by the righteous Judge. Matt. xxv. 41; Rev. vi. 16, 17.

And this will be the reward of their own unrighteousness, their own wickedness, their own unbelief; for not believing that Christ was their Saviour, that he died for them. Such are condemned already for their unbelief (John iii. 28.); and shall be damned at last, should they die in it. Mark xvi. 16.

It is not, however, the will of God, that any of the human race should perish. Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4.

He has given his own dear Son, with a view to prevent the sinner's ruin. John iii. 17.

The Most High invites sinners, in the most tender and affectionate manner, to come to him, through his Son, for salvation. Isa. lv. 7.

In all these professions of regard he is sincere, and complains of their obstinacy. John v. 40.

If sinners will but return, they may expect the most favourable reception. See the case of the returning prodigal (Luke xv. 11, &c.), which, in the most engaging and affecting manner, illustrates the Divine conduct to returning sinners.

THE NATURE OF REMISSION OF SIN.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, &c.

Eph. i. 7.

VARIOUS are the views given us in the Scriptures of the great Messiah, the Christ of God.

He is represented as the great Prophet and Teacher of mankind. Deut. xviii. 15, 18.

As our great High Priest. Heb. ii. 17; iv. 14.

As universal King and Governor. Isa. ix. 6, 7.

As the Redeemer of the world. Job xix. 25.

Our Intercessor with the Father. 1 John ii. 1.

Our great Forerunner. Heb. vi. 20.

And as the grand channel of communication from God the Father to man, and from man to God. (John

xiv. 6.) Also the text, "We have redemption through his blood," &c.

We shall consider,

1. The blessing of forgiveness of sin, which is one of the most prominent features of the gospel of Christ; and,

1. It is necessary for all men.

The necessity of forgiveness originates in man's guilt.

All are naturally unbelievers. Rom. ii. 32.

All have sinned. Rom. iii. 23.

And, consequently all are guilty. Rom. iii. 19.

This must be known so as to be felt.

And so produce the liveliest sensations of distress. Joel ii. 12; Ps. vi. 6, 7.

And the most fervent applications for mercy. Luke xviii. 13.

2. If we would obtain this forgiveness, we must go to God for it.

It is his law that we have broken.

It is his authority that we have rejected.

It is his honour that we have insulted.

It is his goodness that we have despised. Rom. ii. 4.

It is his mercies that we have abused.

And his bleeding, dying love, that we have slighted.

To God, therefore, we must make confession. Ps. xxxii. 5; 1 John i. 9.

To God we must pray for forgiveness. Ps. xxv. 11.

From God alone we must expect to receive it. Mic. vii. 18.

No mere man can forgive sin.

But Jesus Christ can, and does forgive sin. Matt. ix. 2.

And hence he is God. Col. i. 14—17.

And is exalted for this very purpose. Acts v. 31.

Let sensible, guilty sinners make the trial, and they will prove the truth of his promise. Matt. xi. 28.

3. We must be willing to receive forgiveness in God's own way, according to the terms of his gospel.

We are not to expect to receive it for the sake of any thing we have done or suffered.

Or for any thing that we have sacrificed for Christ.

But for Christ's sake who died for our sins. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Man, however, is not altogether passive in the great work of salvation; for he is required,

To repent of his sins. Acts iii. 19.

To confess his sins. 1 John i. 9.

To forsake the practice of them. Isa. lv. 7.

To pray for forgiveness. Ps. xxv. 11.

And to believe in Christ, in order to it. Rom. iii. 25.

Not any one, nor all of these acts together, merit the blessing; but only prepare the soul, through the Divine influence to receive it.

God forgives the believing sinner, strictly speaking, not for the sake of his repentance, confession, forsaking, praying, or believing; but for his own name's sake. Isa. xliii. 25.

4. Forgiveness principally consists in the removal of guilt from the conscience. Heb. x. 22.

When the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience; then, all obligation to punishment is done away. John iii. 18; Rom. viii. 1.

Divine justice has now no claims upon the sinner who has believed in Christ, who bore the punishment for him. Isa. liii. 6.

II. The grand mean through which this inestimable blessing is conveyed to guilty man.

The blood of Christ.

Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin, Heb. ix. 22.

Man by sin, had forfeited his life, his soul, his all, to offended justice ; who, ever concerned for the honour of the law, demanded his punishment.

Guilty man must die, or some one qualified for the undertaking must die for him, that the sinner might have life. Jesus died for this purpose ; his blood was shed for the guilty. Matt. xxvi. 28.

His blood was necessary, as being pure and untainted. 1 Pet. i. 19.

This was prefigured under the law. Num. xix. 2 ; Exod. xii. 5.

His blood was necessary, as being of infinite value, it being the blood of the God-man ; hence called the blood of God. Acts xx. 28.

And, as such, has an infinity of merit connected with it, sufficient to save a thousand guilty worlds, if so many existed. Heb. vii. 25.

This blood was really shed in the garden, the hall, and on the cross.

Then was the fountain opened, spoken of by Zechariah, xiii. 1.

This blood sprinkles the mercy-seat.

Applied to the conscience, it saves from sin. 1 John i. 7.

The redeemed in glory have felt its efficacy. Rev. vii. 14.

And on this account celebrate the Redeemer's praise. Rev. i. 5, 6.

III. In the whole of this transaction, the riches of his grace are gloriously displayed.

1. How great is the blessing of forgiveness in itself! How welcome to a conscious, guilty soul! more welcome than a rope or plank to a drowning man; or a pardon to a criminal, with a rope about his neck, going to be hanged.

2. How unworthy the person upon whom it is bestowed! Ungrateful, wicked, rebellious, and ungodly. Rom. v. 6.

3. How perfect is his work! He forgives all sin, takes away all guilt, nor leaves the smallest stain behind.

4. How great the punishment from which it delivers! An eternal hell; the worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched. Mark ix. 44.

5. How great the happiness to which it leads! an eternal heaven; fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore. Ps. xvi. 11.

6. And how great the means employed to accomplish this end! The death of God's dear Son! For this he was dreadfully wounded, bruised, and broken. Isa. liii. 5.

I shall now close the subject by [some application of it: and,

1. How dreadful is the state of the impenitent, unforgiven, hardened sinner! Infinitely more dreadful than that of a man over whose head is suspended, by a single hair, a naked sword; the sinner is suspended over hell by the thread of life, and is in danger of falling into it every moment. "What meanest thou, O sleeper," &c. Jonah i. 6.

2. The most guilty may yet obtain forgiveness: Jesus shed his blood for the chief of sinners. Its effi-

easy is equal to the greatest guilt. Manasseh, the thief upon the cross, Saul of Tarsus, and thousands more, have felt its saving power. Heb. xii. 1.

4. Let those who are in the possession of the blessing, gratefully bless the hand which gave it; and as the Lord has justified him freely, let them expect to be sanctified wholly. (1 Thess. v. 23.) For this blood cleanses from all unrighteousness (1 John i. 9.); from all sin (verse 7.); and so expect to be presented at last by Jesus, your adored Saviour, without spot, &c. Eph. v. 25—27.

THE CHARACTER AND SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, &c.
Zech. xiii. 7.

THESE words contain a plain and pointed prediction of the great Messiah, who, in the fulness of time, was to take away sin by a sacrifice of himself: This opinion we deliver without the smallest hesitation.

This passage is so explained by Jesus Christ, where he evidently applies it to himself. Matt. xxvi. 31.

Consider,

I. The character of Jesus Christ, as here represented: he is called,

1. God's Shepherd. The Scriptures often speak of him as such. Ps. xxiii. 1.

He is called the great Shepherd (Heb. xiii. 20.); expressive of the dignity of his character, as God over all.

The chief Shepherd. (1 Pet. v. 4.) In relation to

his ministers, who are appointed by him, and to whom they are accountable.

The term, Shepherd, is relative, and refers to his followers, whom he calls his sheep. John x. 16.

It expresses his tender care over them, which is always proportioned to their peculiar trials, temptations, &c. Isa. xl. 11.

Also his love to them, infinitely surpassing the love of the sons of men; which the waters of affliction could not quench, nor the floods of temptation drown; which the terrors of a violent death could not affright, the agonies of the cross, nor the torments of hell, destroy. He died for the sheep (John x. 15.); and hence he claims the character of the good Shepherd. Ver. 11.

2. God's fellow, his equal.

They are one in essence, intimately and essentially one. (John x. 30.) To see the one, is to see the other. John xiv. 8, 9.

They are one in power. He made the world (John i. 3.); and all things in heaven and earth. Col. i. 16, 17.

And, when on earth, he did the works his Father did. John v. 17, &c.

He cured all manner of diseases. Luke vii. 21.

He forgave sins. Ver. 48.

He raised the dead. John xi. 43, 44.

They are one in honour and glory. To dishonour the Son, is to dishonour the Father (1 John ii. 22, 23.); and to honour the Son, is to honour the Father. John v. 22, 23.

His sacrifice was voluntary. As Jehovah's equal, he had an absolute right and propriety in himself, and could lay down his life, and take it up again, when he pleased. John x. 17, 18.

II. The awful mandate here given against God's Shepherd, and God's fellow: "Awake, O sword, smite the Shepherd!"

The command proceeds from the eternal Father, whose justice demanded the death of our Lord. Isa. liii. 10.

Divine justice had no demands on Christ, simply considered, as the Son of God; but, when viewed as our voluntary substitute, it had the most dreadful requisitions to make upon him. Ps. xl. 7, 8.

It brought him from heaven to earth.

It pursued him through every afflicting scene of his life.

It transfixed him on the cross.

Every pain he suffered, every pang he endured, was a part of the mighty debt we owed.

1. The principal scenes of sorrow were in the garden of Gethsemane.

Here he was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Matt. xxvi. 38.

Here, being in an agony, he prayed fervently.

And sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. Luke xxii. 44.

2. Also in the hall of judgment.

Here he was scourged. Matt. xxvii. 26.

Here he was stripped naked, arrayed in a purple robe, ver. 28.

Crowned with a crown of thorns; put a reed into his hands, and mocked him, hailing him King of the Jews, ver. 29.

The Jews spit upon him, and with the reed smote him on the head, ver. 30.

Taking off the robe, and putting on his own raiment, they led him away to death (ver. 31.); bearing the cross on which he was to die. John xix. 17.

And, as if to complete the disgrace intended for him, they crucified him between two thieves, ver. 18.

3. Calvary was the place that witnessed the dreadful deed. Luke xxiii. 33.

There he, God's Shepherd, God's fellow, was smitten both by God and man. Man nailed him to the cross, and wantonly insulted him in his agony. The eternal Father deserted him (Mark xv. 34.); and smote him, by laying the sins of the whole world upon him. Isa. liii. 5, 6. 10; 1 John ii. 2.

And thus did our adored Saviour fall beneath the stroke of eternal justice, through that abundant love which he felt to our guilty, wretched souls. Eph. ii. 4.

And thus did the eternal Father smite his Son, his beloved Son, from his hatred to sin, and his boundless love to those who had committed it. John iii. 16.

III. The effect to be produced: "The sheep shall be scattered."

1. By the sheep are meant the disciples of our Lord, particularly the twelve, who were especially his pupils, his followers, his disciples. Matt. xx. 17.

2. Jesus foretold the disciples that they would forsake him, after all their professions of attachment to him. Mark xiv. 27. 29. 31.

3. It was exactly accomplished. One betrays him. (Mark xiv. 43—45.) Another denies him. (Ver. 66—72.) All forsake him. Matt. xxvi. 56.

4. And thus was an ancient prophecy fulfilled. Isa. lxiii. 3.

III. Behold the tender compassion of a gracious God, he promises to turn his hand upon the little ones, his scattered sheep, who were running away in the hour of danger.

1. Little ones, indeed, who had at that time but

little knowledge of human nature, little faith, and little courage.

2. But the Lord pitied them, and turned his hand upon them; who protected them from the rage of the Jews, during the absence of their adored Master, and brought them together again. John xx. 19, 20.

3. And inspired them with ability to preach his truth, and make known his will to the end of the earth. Mark xvi. 14; Matt. xxviii. 20.

4. And enabled them to face the greatest dangers with the most determined courage, not counting their lives dear to them. (Acts xx. 24.) Who were as sheep among wolves. (Matt. x. 16.) And at last died gloriously in the cause of truth and holiness.

5. And were at last gathered home to God, according to the Redeemer's promise. John xiv. 2, 3; Matt. xix. 28.

6. And this he will also do for all his faithful followers at the last great day. (Matt. xxiv. 31.) Who will be an innumerable multitude. (Rev. vii. 9.) And who shall praise God and the Lamb for ever, ver. 10.

Improvement.

1. Let us behold, in this awful transaction, the displeasure of God against sin: and if he punished it so dreadfully in the person of his own Son, what have sinners to expect who neglect this great salvation? Heb. ii. 3.

2. As Divine justice is fully satisfied by the tremendous sufferings of Jesus Christ. Here we behold sufficient ground for a sinner's hope of pardon. Jesus hath died; the sinner may be forgiven. Rom. iii. 25.

This is the ground of the prophet's declaration. Isa. lv. 7.

Of our adored Saviour's invitation. Matt. xi. 28.

Of St. Paul's, and the Ephesians' experience.
Eph. i. 7.

And through which alone we can attain to God.
Rev. vii. 14.

To whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever.
Amen. Rev. i. 6.

CHRIST'S SECOND APPEARING TO CHANGE THE BODIES OF HIS SAINTS.

For our conversation is in heaven, &c.—Phil. iii. 20, 21.

AT a very early period of the church a number of false teachers arose, who did what they could to corrupt Christianity, and seduce believers from their simplicity, as it is in Christ. 2 Cor. xi. 3.

Their attempts were awfully successful in the province of Galatia. (Gal. iii. 1.) On this subject St. Paul expresses his astonishment (chap. i. 6.); and his fear (chap. iv. 11.); and pronounces a dreadful anathema against them, chap. i. 8, 9.

In the verses just before the text, he warns his beloved Philippians against those dangerous invaders; and gives a very affecting description of their character, their views, and their end, ver. 18, 19.

In the text he recommends his own example to their imitation, together with that of his fellow apostles; for our conversation, says he, is in heaven, &c.: by which expressions the Christian is described,

I. By the nature of their conversation; it is in heaven.

The term conversation is complex, and is applied to various objects; it is applied,

1. To our speech and language in general. (2 Pet. iii. 11.) And is expressive of that variety of religious subjects which usually engage the conversation of good men ; such as,

The eternal God, his nature, perfections, and works of nature, providence, and grace.

Jesus Christ, his eternal power and Godhead, and his boundless love to sinners.

The eternal Spirit, in his rich variety of operations upon the mind.

The Christian's experience, in all his pleasant and painful exercises.

The work of grace in the human heart, in its commencement, progress, and perfection.

The glory that is to follow, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures.

These, and a variety of other subjects of a similar nature, engaging the attention and conversation of good men ; with propriety they may say, our conversation is in heaven, as it is thus engaged about things which relate to that better country.

2. To our conduct and deportment in life. Psalm xxxvii. 14 ; 1. 23.

The real Christian walks by a heavenly rule, God's testimonies. Ps. cxix. 59.

He is influenced by a heavenly principle, the Spirit and grace of God. Rom. viii. 14.

His actions are directed to a heavenly end, to Christ. (Phil. i. 21.) To God's glory. (1 Cor. x. 31.) To his eternal salvation in heaven. Rom. ii. 7.

But we may remark, that the term here rendered conversation, also signifies citizenship, and hence it is,

1. That heaven is sometimes spoken of in the Scrip-

tures under the idea of a city; and in this way Abraham considered it. Heb. xi. 10. 16.

2. That real Christians are free denizens of that city of God. The church of God upon earth, and the church of God in heaven, are one, divided only by the narrow stream of death. (Heb. xii. 18—24.) Where the saints are here represented as already come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, &c.

They constitute but one church, having all one Father, one elder Brother, one Comforter, one happiness, only differing in degree. Theirs is glory, ours grace; grace is glory in the bud, glory is grace perfected.

They are one in affection; departed friends love us still. Our experience tells us we still love them; and probably they will be among the foremost to welcome us upon our arrival at the paradise of God.

II. The Christian is described by his expectation. He expects the Saviour from heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, &c. and this expectation is founded.

1. Upon the express promise of Christ himself. Matt. xxiv. 44; xxv. 31; John xiv. 1—3; Rev. xxii. 12.

2. The declaration of the holy angels who attended his ascension into heaven. Acts i. 10, 11.

3. Also the united testimony of the apostles of our Lord. 2 Pet. iii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

But what, we may inquire, does the Christian expect Christ to do for him when he comes from heaven? He expects him to change his vile body, &c. And here we may observe,

1. The quality of our present habitation, a vile

body, vile as it respects its original, as being the seat of numerous diseases, as being the instrument by which the soul commits sin, and as to its end (Gen. iii. 19.); a newly opened grave is an awful confirmation of that text.

2. But this vile body is to be changed, and the pattern after which it is to be fashioned is the glorious body of Christ. What his body is, that will ours be. It will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual. 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

This work, it must be acknowledged, is a great work. When we behold a newly opened grave, and see the scattered atoms of our departed friends; and when we connect with what we see, the idea of a glorious resurrection, a glorious body, like unto Christ's glorious body, our faith is ready to stagger, and we are almost ready to exclaim, how can these things be? The answer is in the text.

3. It will be accomplished by the mighty power of Christ, by which he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

It was Jesus Christ who formed the universe, with all its rich variety. John. i. 3; Col. i. 16, 17.

He formed the body of man of the dust of the earth. (Gen. ii. 7.) And surely the same power which originally formed man's body, can raise it again. Acts xxvi. 8.

He has already conquered the world. John xvi. 33, And has triumphed over Satan. Col. ii. 14, 15.

And also over death, and the grave, in our resurrection. Rom. i. 4.

And he shall finally complete the destruction of both. (Hos. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 52—54.) His power, therefore, is equal to this grand design, and we are assured that he will do it; for.

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ham considered it. Heb.

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II. The
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Matt. xxi
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4. He hath positively declared it. (John v.)
And the truth and faithfulness of his character
its accomplishment. Rev. i. 5.
Improvement.

1. How glorious are the views and expectations
the Christian!
He shall be raised to eternal life. John v. 21.
He shall be raised before the wicked. 1 Thes

iv. 6.
He shall be caught up in the clouds to meet t
Lord in the air, ver. 17.

And shall be for ever with the Lord, ver. 17.

2. How awful, tremendously awful, the state of th
wicked, and their future prospects.

They also shall be raised, all in their graves sh
come forth. John v. 28, 29.

They shall be raised to damnation, ver. 29.

Their terror will be great. Rev. vi. 15—17.

Their end dreadful. Matt. xxv. 41.

3. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we
persuade men

To renounce their evil ways, Isa. lv. 7.

To repent of their sins, Acts iii. 19.

To believe on Jesus Christ, Acts xvi. 31.

To live to Christ, Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

And the end will be glorious. Rom. ii. 7; Re
xiv. 13.

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